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PERSONALITY  
AND  
FELLOWSHIP


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WILLIAM  
RADFIELD

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# PERSONALITY AND FELLOWSHIP



# PERSONALITY AND FELLOWSHIP

BY

WILLIAM BRADFELD, B.A.

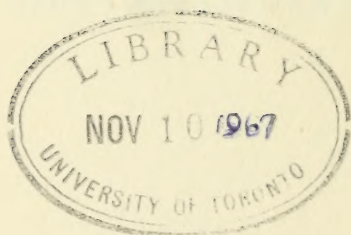
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## PREFACE

My purpose in this Lecture is to show the fundamental importance of fellowship for the religious life. I first turned to the subject as a practical matter of church administration. I felt that it was an undesirable and dangerous thing for the Wesleyan Methodist Church to allow its peculiar form of fellowship, that of the class-meeting, to fall into neglect and disuse. Naturally I began to examine the reasonableness of this feeling, and also the amount of justification it had in the teachings of the Bible. At this time other interests led me to read Baldwin's *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, and I recognized the great religious importance of his doctrine of the Self, as a category which embraces both the Ego and the Alter, and of the fact that our knowledge of ourselves and of our neighbours is born together and grows together as a unity. This took me back to an older inquiry into the difference between the kind of knowledge that we have of persons and that which we have of things, an inquiry suggested years ago by Huxley's proposal that the efficacy of prayer might be tested by building two hospitals, the patients in one of which should be prayed for and those in the other not, both being similarly treated in other respects. I had seen when facing that problem that we could not pray for the one set and deliberately leave the other out, and had tried to make clear the reason to myself.



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I thus came to recognize that we could not know any person without having duties towards him, and that this fact involved the existence of a deep and real unity between all who are possessed of personal life.

Further thinking has developed the ideas thus suggested from various sources into a more definite and coherent whole, which I am trying to state in this Lecture. I can see that it is gathered from heterogeneous sources, part of it being an interpretation of Bible teaching, part psychology and epistemology, while part arises from church experience, and that I must lay myself open to the charge of going from one to the other of these incongruous elements in a way that may well provoke a student of either of them who should chance to read this book. My defence is that the resultant is a unity, or at least is on the way to one, for it presents a view of life and duty which can only be stated as one thing. The heterogeneity of the elements of my thought is that of life itself. If I were able to take in the whole of the problem, there would be not less variety but far more. For a view of life and duty must deal with our physical, intellectual, and moral nature, our relations to one another and to God, the historic origins of our social and religious life, and the End to which we are going. I cannot, therefore, apologize for the curiously varied nature of my material. For my own painfully limited knowledge of it, and my very inadequate equipment for my task, I do apologize with sincere humility. I have only dared to write because, first of all, I do not know that anybody else has said what I want to say; and, secondly, because I believe it to be true



and helpful in the present circumstances of the Methodist Church ; and, finally, because I entertain a strong hope that my doing so may provoke stronger thinkers to do it better, and to set the great truths of fellowship before the world in an adequate and convincing fashion.

We need to possess this truth as doctrine formally stated, and placed in relation to our thought as a whole. It seems to me that some of our people are actually turning away from it, because they do not see its reasonable, and indeed vital, connexion with modern thought on the individual and society. Would that the men who are far better equipped for the task than I am, and who could raise a noble structure of reasoned thought where I can but put down roughly a few foundation truths, would deal with this subject themselves as it ought to be dealt with, and give the world a Methodist Philosophy of Fellowship that should set the whole company of Christ at work exploring this field of treasure for themselves !



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## INTRODUCTION

The value of religious intercourse—The socializing of our religion—A re-examination of our nature and the Bible with regard to this question—The People of God and the Church—The Corporate Life—The Individual—Justification by Faith and Holy Catholic Church—Have we a solution in our own possession?

THE importance of having religious intercourse with one another has often been seriously underestimated. It means bringing our private, personal experiences into the common stock, where they can be tested and we can see how much in them is gold and how much is dross. This will enable us to get a firmer grip of the good that has come to us, and to recognize our mistakes. Our experiences will then be available for other people, and we ourselves shall get valuable knowledge of the art and practice of living to God from them, as they will from us. The pooled, criticized, sifted, common stock of experience will be available for progress at a much greater rate than now prevails. Contrast the present-day progress in scientific knowledge with the stagnation of religious experience. Surely there is such a thing as progress possible in the religious life. There are times when men have made advances in the knowledge of God, and afterwards the world has never quite fallen back to where it was before. We cannot say that the progress is continuous, but it is real; and if we can discover its laws, we may

hope that it will proceed more continuously and more rapidly.

Religious life has, moreover, a large element of feeling, and all our feelings have a much intensified value when they are shared ; indeed, it is only when thus shared and intensified that they become sources of insight. The dull, vague, low-tension feelings never help us to see anything. The pure, intense, vibrant feelings—even if they are painful—bring vision with them. We cannot, apart from our fellows, attain to the insight and vision that come from the loftiest religious emotion.

We neglect very largely the socializing of our religion. We 'go to church,' but protect ourselves very carefully from any exposure of our own state of mind and heart. We leave that to the preacher, and everybody does not like it if he speaks too intimately.

My object is to attempt a re-examination of our own nature in order that we may see better what is the relation between ourselves and the others. There is material enough now available in some of the well-established results of psychology and philosophy to make it worth while to raise again such questions as 'What is my brother to me?' and 'What am I to him?' and concerning God, 'What is the kind of relationship that He wants to establish with me?' My brother, again, how do he and I stand with regard to each other when it is a question of living to God? Can I live to God alone, or do I need my brother's help? If we can be mutually helpful, what is the way forward? I believe, too, that our Bible has much to teach us on this matter. I want, therefore, to begin by trying at least to make an

outline of the main teachings of the Old Testament with regard to this fellowship. What was the 'People of God'? Is it an exploded idea, or a worn-out one? or has it an important place among our religious conceptions to-day? Much of the discussion about 'the Church' seems to me to miss the mark because the people who discuss, if they themselves know what they mean by a Church, certainly do not succeed in making the rest of us know. Has it got a common life, and if so, how does it live it? Where and when can we see the church living as a church, every member necessary to the other, blessing and being blessed by the other, so that the lack of any one would be a real pain to the company and a conscious corporate loss?

The conviction at which I have arrived myself is that the Corporate Life for which we are created is of even greater importance than our Individual Life. I think the Corporate Life is more fundamental to our nature than the Individual Life, though it is vitally necessary to it that the Individual Life should be at its highest and best. When individual personality was in an unawakened, unrecognized, undeveloped state, as in the earlier Old Testament times, the Corporate Life could not be very keenly self-conscious or very keenly conscious of God. It was, therefore, necessary first, as soon as might be, to develop the individual, to let him realize the sense of personal freedom and personal responsibility. The Bible shows how it was done. There were two tremendously potent factors at work to produce this awakening of the individual. There was the living God with His



insistent claim on the recognition, the choice, and the obedient love of His people. And there was the terrible fact of Sin making men guilty and making God angry. With Sin claiming its cruel dominion, and with God refusing to let men alone in it, determined to destroy sin and equally determined to save men, a great struggle has gone on in which, with the travail pains of a new birth, men have come to understand personal responsibility, and to realize that God was giving them for their salvation a free will capable of choosing Him as their Saviour.

This struggle has been, and still is, so intense that where it rages there seems hardly room for the Corporate Life at all. The Man, his Sin, and his God seem to fill the whole horizon. The man has to make his peace with his God, and God has to make Himself known as Saviour to His child. What have the 'Others' to do with it? They cannot move the free man's own will. He must bend it himself. Nor can they speak God's reconciling word. He must speak it Himself. Protestant religion was right in its rejection of any and every doctrine that did not leave room for God Himself to find His lost child, and for the man, compelled only by the

Love that will not let us go,

to come to God for himself. What, then, is left for the Corporate Life?

I do not think that the Protestant Churches have answered this question satisfactorily yet. I also believe strongly that the Methodist Church in its doctrine of fellowship possesses the true answer, though, alas! often failing to recognize it. The



'Methodist experience' places the Corporate Life at once in its true position. The individual must come to God for himself, it is true, but all that united prayer and sympathy can do must be done to help him. The moment he has come and has found God, the Corporate Life is there to help him rejoice over the treasure he has found. He wants to talk about it, his whole-hearted impulse is to share it. His will chooses the company of God's people as surely as it chooses Christ. He becomes a member of the Body by the same resolve which brought him to the Head. He is saved into the fellowship of the church, and the new life is nurtured and grows as the common possession of the rejoicing company. I must be forgiven if I think that the individual doctrine of Justification by Faith and the social doctrine of Holy Catholic Church are harmonized more perfectly here than anywhere else in the world.

Ever since the Reformation the Christian Church has found extreme difficulty in the practical adjustment of her teaching on these two important matters. The corporate unity of the people of God must be firmly maintained, and also the access of the individual to God and his lonely, personal responsibility for accepting salvation. But where the 'right of every man to go to God for himself' has been most vigorously proclaimed, the doctrine of membership of the Body of Christ has often weakened and faded; and where 'the Church' has been the prominent conception, the need of individual conversion and the blessing of individual personal assurance has been but little insisted on, and sometimes even denied. Now we Methodists not only say that we believe in

both ; we make some attempt also to live both ; and where the Methodist experience is flourishing vigorously there is a deep consciousness both of individual personal access to God and also of a true and vital fellowship with other believers as members of the body of Christ. One of our dangers is that of not realizing the theological significance of those spiritual facts with which we are most familiar. We go wandering round discussing with our neighbours of other churches, and with one another, questions of ministry, sacraments, terms of membership, church order, and the like, oblivious of the fact that what we are seeking is already in our own house, if we will but find it there.

And if our fellowship below  
In Jesus be so sweet,

then, to repeat Carlyle's quotation from *Wilhelm Meister*, 'our America is here or nowhere.' Where two or three are met in the Name, and the Head is there with His members and the common life is realized by the company, there is the Holy Catholic Church. As to Ministry, Sacraments, Church Order, it is well to see that they are cared for and correct ; but after all they, at their highest and best, are but means of grace, while this is the thing itself, the life that is lived by the faith of the Son of God.

And in the life of Christian fellowship there is the solution of the great puzzle as to how to reconcile individual freedom and responsibility with corporate unity in its highest sense. We shall see how the old Jewish conception of the 'People of God' as a nation, one in blood and political autonomy,

broke into pieces as the claims, rights, duties, and sins of the individual woke up and asserted themselves. And we shall do well to remember that if the unity of the people of God has been asserted since, it has been much more as a matter of faith than of experience. Where attempts have been made to realize it as a matter of political and social life, they have always been at the expense of conscience. Something has had to be denied or sacrificed of individuality in order to gain even such poor unity as has been expressed in these ways. It seemed as if the Reformation could only secure the recognition of the religious importance of the individual by destroying the unity of the Church. And yet we have it in our hearts that the unity is a reality, and, moreover, one of a very deep and vital kind. Also we feel that it ought to be expressed in visible conduct. On the other hand we have seen the great peril of demanding any 'sacrifice of the intellect' in the supposed interests of 'the body.' Men must be free to confess the truth that is in them; if they sacrifice that inner liberty, the loss is irreparable. And so 'justification by faith' and 'Holy Catholic Church' have become the watchwords of antagonistic companies. On both sides men have desired to maintain the whole truth, and have earnestly claimed that they were doing so. But the logic of the situation seemed to be against them, and they have either preached the 'Church' until the vital importance of the individual will to trust God has been lost sight of; or else they have preached 'whosoever will' till people forgot that they were members one of another, and that living stones only

find their meaning and value when they are built into a holy temple. Is it possible that we Methodists, in this homely, little, domestic institution which we call a Class-meeting, have indeed had, almost unnoticed, in our own possession a truth of life which resolves this antagonism between the body and the member, between the One and the Many, between freedom and love? Our doctrine of fellowship, and it alone, seems to me capable of bridging this gulf, and preserving both truths without in any degree limiting the value or force of either in order to make it fit the other. I suppose that when stated as general propositions we all believe and acknowledge that the freedom of the individual is essential to the highest form of social life; and also that it is only in the fullest social life that the individual ever can completely realize himself; but for all that, when an Evangelical declares that no sacraments or church status can make an unconverted man a Christian at all, or, on the other hand, when a Catholic urges that there is no salvation outside the Church, we do not all of us recognize in their new dress the general propositions we so readily assented to. The difficulty is a very deep-seated one. On the one hand no 'jot or tittle' of personal freedom or right of direct access to God through Christ must be surrendered even for a moment, and on the other hand it must be maintained fully that the body is more than the member, that the individual was made for society, and not society for the individual, and that it is indeed 'in one body' that we are reconciled to God through Christ.

PART I  
HISTORICAL





## CHAPTER I

**The Past and the Records**—The use and sufficiency of Scripture—Ideas of personality and fellowship indistinct in early Old Testament religion—The group and the individual—Achan—The conception of God, People, and Land—Not at first an exclusive idea, but a complete one. Eden, Cain, the Flood—The Call of Abram (the Old Testament Plan of Salvation), Joseph, Moses—The essential correctness of the idea—Its essentially monotheistic nature—Jehovah's help in war—The idea expands to infinity.

It would appear that any sketch we can give of the history of personality and fellowship in religion must be painfully inadequate. We shall make no attempt to go outside the facts available in the Bible record. It is true, of course, that they are only the fraction of a fraction of the religious experience of mankind ; but there is good reason for believing that these records actually contain the gist of the matter, and that we can gather from them those parts of the past experience of our race which are of most value to us in endeavouring to think out the problems of the religious life for ourselves to-day. Bergson has pointed out with regard to our own individual memory that while our self-determined action is conditioned by the whole of our past, whether remembered or not, the function of memory is to call up such fragments of that past as shall best assist us in *thinking* over the present situation with a view to action. He suggests that

the explanation of many puzzling phenomena of memory is to be found in this utilitarian view of its purpose. His idea may very well be transferred to the problem of the religious history of mankind, and the Bible record of it. We are what we are to-day in religion because of the whole past through which our race has lived, and especially because of the whole government and revelation of the living God ; but the written Word serves for the corporate life the same purpose that our memory serves for us as individuals. It gives us such parts of the past as are most useful to assist our present thinking, and gives them in such a form that they are available for this purpose. Completer records would be so voluminous that we could not handle them ; they would require such an amount of knowledge as could not be accumulated in a lifetime in order to interpret them ; that is to say, they would be practically useless. But a book whose bulk is not so great but that we are able to read it for ourselves, and one which gives us the sifted best of the experiences of mankind in relation to God, can be used as we use our own memories to guide our judgement. The Bible is the remembered past of the religious history of the People of God. And it is the conviction of Christian people that the record has been made under divine inspiration, so that what has been handed down to us is our sufficient guide. The whole of this great past has made the Christian company what it is to-day, but the remembered and recorded part of it is our guide when we give our thoughts to understanding the way we have come, and to choosing the way that lies before us.

If we explore the religion of the Old Testament in early times, we shall find the ideas of personality and fellowship so indistinct and undeveloped that for the most part they elude us altogether. But we find a view of God and the World and Human Society which provides us with a good foundation on which to base our work. Personality and fellowship are ideas which, especially in their combination, presuppose a social order. Moreover, the idea of a social whole is one which historically emerged at an earlier period than that of individual personality and the fellowship arising from it. People thought of the group before they thought of the individual. The story of Achan gives us most welcome assistance in our endeavour to realize this fact. To begin with, the unit is Israel as a whole. 'The children of Israel committed a trespass . . . for Achan . . . took of the devoted thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.'<sup>1</sup> They therefore could not stand before their enemies. In the investigation which follows, first the tribe, then the larger family group, then the smaller family group, and finally the man is taken. But even 'the man' is not the individual. They 'took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the mantle, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had.'<sup>2</sup> It had obviously been a great effort to narrow it down to that, and very probably the story is a landmark in the progress of Israel towards the idea of the individual as a religious and social unit.

Yet in its early days Old Testament religion

<sup>1</sup> Joshua vii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua vii. 24.

presents us with a conception of the Whole which is so essentially true that the widest and deepest thoughts of Christianity base themselves securely upon it, or arise naturally from its fruitful suggestiveness. The primitive conception to which I refer is that of a People belonging to a God who gives them a Land, and governs them and it together. We cannot call this the conception of a Universe because, so long as the idea remains undeveloped, it does not definitely exclude the thought that many such totalities may co-exist. Evidently the early Hebrews did thus think of other peoples existing who had gods and lands of their own, and with whom they had nothing to do. As, however, they developed in religious experience, the necessary implications of their own conception prevented them from admitting the existence of any other gods at all. For the earlier position the case of David is peculiarly instructive. When he had been driven to take refuge with the Philistines, we find him cursing the men who have compelled him to do so because 'they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD.'<sup>1</sup>

Although, however, this primitive conception of a totality comprised of a God, a People, and a Land is not primarily an exclusive one, it has, nevertheless, a completeness of its own which from the first is well marked. If similar groups are recognized as existing, they are looked upon as having no claim upon the Israelites, and nothing to give them.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, 20. See also Judges xi. 24.

Mostly they are antagonistic and dangerous, and the best thing to do with them is to destroy them utterly. His God, his People, and his Land provide for the son of Israel all that is needed for the fullest and worthiest life of which he is capable. He has nothing to gain, but everything to lose by departing from them.

In the ancient stories of his race this thought is fundamental. In the story of Eden the LORD God is the maker of earth and heaven, and, separately, of man. He plants the garden which man is to till. He proceeds to train and discipline him, with unchallenged authority. Man, 'made of the dust of the ground,' and inbreathed with the 'breath of life,' holds 'both of God who gives and of His tribes that take.' He needs society in order to a complete life. The problem of the position of the animal creation, to which in this connexion we shall have to give some consideration, is raised here. We see man, a being with claims and duties of love to his wife and obedience to his God. The 'external world' in the form of a garden provides him with a home, an occupation, and a living. But the next story, that of Cain and Abel, brings out our 'totality' with very great vividness. Cain's punishment is that the Land curses him; he fears that the People will kill him; and he is hidden from the face of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> His terrible excommunication separates him from Land and People and God.

The story of the Flood, with its saved People and its promise that the ground shall no more be cursed for their sake, shows the influence of the same deep-seated conception. And in the Call of Abraham it

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 11-14.



takes its place definitely among the foundations of the Hebrew faith. God will make him a People, will give him a Land, and will Himself be his God. That may indeed be called the Old Testament Plan of Salvation, to be worked out through the ages, but never to be fundamentally altered. The very significant words with which the Book of Genesis closes—'a coffin in Egypt'—bear witness that this threefold conception of a People which was the People of God, a Land that the Lord their God should give them, and a God who was not ashamed to be called their God, had already become the material of a religious faith that could defy death itself.

The story is resumed with Moses, who at the burning bush is called to be a deliverer by a God who claims the Israelites as 'My people,' and proclaims His purpose of bringing them into the 'land flowing with milk and honey.' In the Ten Commandments He proclaims Himself as 'Jehovah thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'; He demands that they shall have no other god, and asserts that He is 'jealous' of His place in their hearts, and glad to show them mercy. And He promises them length of days in the land that He Himself will give them.

The essential correctness of the Hebrew analysis deserves our admiring acknowledgement. Other peoples mixed up their conceptions of deity with natural objects and forces, and possibly with the spirits of the dead; but these people so thought of God as to keep Him distinct both from the world of things and from the world of finite persons, although He was the Supreme Ruler and Lord in

both. It was no small achievement that at so early a stage of human culture they arrived at a classification that cannot be improved upon, and one that makes it easy for us to believe that God was indeed revealing Himself to His own people. The distinctness of man from the world of things and of God from both are the deepest distinctions human thought has ever succeeded in making. Twentieth-century psychology and logic cannot propound a better division than that which classifies the totality of experience under the three heads of God, Society, and the External World. Of course, it is not claimed that the ancient concept had the precision of modern scientific definition, but it needs no apology even on that score. Its rightness is obvious. We begin to realize what an incalculable gain it was for Hebrew religion to be based upon such sound thinking, when we compare it with surrounding religions, whose wrong ideas about the relations between man, nature, and God surely encouraged all their terrible mistakes in religious practice. The adoption of an easy-going, sensuous nature-worship like that of the Canaanite Baalim, with its total forgetfulness of the claims of moral righteousness, can be explained, at least in part, by indolent thinking as to the personality of God, and the consequent lack of any sense of moral duty towards Him. And the fierce cult of generative and destructive power which Jezebel brought with her from Zidon needed the initial mistake of identifying God with the sun to get itself started at all.

It is clear that the monotheistic nature of this conception of a great Unity embracing God and People and Land was not at first apparent to the

Israelites. At first they assumed that other peoples in other lands were possessed of other gods, but it was not very long before they began to realize that such an assumption contradicted their own faith. For they could not avoid having relations with other peoples and contact with other lands. And in these matters they especially needed the assistance of their God, and, seeking, they obtained it. He helped them to fight, and fought for them. He gave them victory over their enemies. It became plain that He had power over these peoples and lands, and, moreover, that His was predominant power. If He was to be their God He must have such power, for unless He could deliver them out of the hand of their enemies it would not be worth while to worship Him. Many a god did go down along with his people because of precisely this inability to overcome stronger forces from outside. The Assyrian commander-in-chief asking 'Where are the gods of Hamath, of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena and Ivvah?'<sup>1</sup> brings this vividly home to us. For the Jews, faith in Jehovah as their God meant faith in His power to save them, and therefore faith in His supremacy. But this left no room in thought for another god at all.

The same conclusion was strengthened by the belief that He was the Maker of the World. It is not easy to say which of these two elements was more active in developing monotheism, His relation to the World as its Maker, or His relation to His People as their Saviour. Together they were

<sup>1</sup>2 Kings xviii. 34.

irresistible. But the final step was only slowly taken. If He was God of all the earth, and there was none other but He, then He was the God of all the peoples. It is, however, only at its greatest heights that Old Testament religion perceives this. In the thought of Israel as the Servant of Jehovah,<sup>1</sup> bearing His light and salvation to the ends of the earth, the great truth shines out for a moment; but it is soon obscured by dreams of the nations as coming 'bending' to Zion as its 'plowmen and vinedressers.'<sup>2</sup> But it is the higher thought which most truly conforms to the original idea, and the conception of God and People and Land only comes to its own when we acknowledge one God the Creator of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible; one Society of Persons giving Him allegiance out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue; and one Universe that is full of His glory.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlii. 6-7, xlix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lx. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lxi. 5.

## CHAPTER II

Origin of the idea God's revelation of Himself—Dean Stanley's words—The first movement of person towards person comes from the superior life—God made Himself known—Creating ideal personalities—Unexpectedness a proof of reality—The gods men have made for themselves—The kind of people the revelation has produced—The Ten Commandments thoroughly personal—The attitude of the Jews toward other religions—Personal claims and duties — Righteousness — Anthropomorphism — Jehovah's self-consciousness and independence.

IF we ask for the origin of this great religious conception of a totality composed of God, People, and Land, we shall find that the people of the Old Testament believed that it came to them by the revelation of God. All arose from His personal activity. He Himself chose them to be His people, He gave them their Land, and He made Himself known to them as their God.

The LORD said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee : and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and be thou a blessing : and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse : and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xii. 1-3.



As Dean Stanley says :

Interpret these words as you will ; give them a meaning more or less literal, more or less restricted ; yet with what a force do they break in upon the homeliness of the rest of the narrative : what an impulse do they disclose in the innermost heart of the movement : what a long vista do they open even to the very close of the history, of which this was the first beginning !<sup>1</sup>

Our special interest is with the fact that it was as a Person seeking a personal relation with the man He had chosen, and the People he was to become, that God first made Himself known to mankind. As a consequence the first great lessons in Personality learned by the Hebrew people were lessons on the character of their God.

The first movement of person towards person comes from the superior life. The mother calls out from her babe the recognition of personality and relationship. She makes herself known to the child, and known as mother ; and in learning to recognize her as mother the child awakes to the consciousness of itself as her child. So God spoke ; and making Himself known as their God He made it possible for men to learn to think of themselves as the People of God.

He made Himself known. 'A God who was simply the product of the percipient mind, and who was not at the same time the producer of the divine idea, would not be God.'<sup>2</sup> To this sentence

<sup>1</sup> Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church*, Vol. I., Lecture I.

<sup>2</sup> Dorner's *System of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. I., p. 39.

of Dorner's we may add one from Flint: 'The proofs of God's existence must be in fact simply His own manifestations.'<sup>1</sup> Man has not by searching found out God. Indeed, it is not reasonable to think that he could do so unless God wanted to be found, and in that case He would presumably make Himself known.

The testimony of historic religion is that He has done so. One of the suspicions of unbelief has been that this is an illusion; that men have themselves created the giant figure which they have projected on the clouds and called God. The fact that God has revealed Himself as a Person claiming personal relations with His people affords the very strongest evidence that this suspicion is unjustifiable. It is true that out of the resources of their own experience men do create ideal personalities. The young man who, at a certain stage of life, creates for himself an ideal maiden, and proceeds to adore his own creation, is a well-known figure. Let us ask what precisely is the difference when he awakes to the realities of life and falls in love with a woman who comes into his life from outside, and is in no sense a creature of his dreams? Is it not the element of surprise? He knew precisely how his ideal fair one would behave, and what she would say under all conceivable circumstances. But he never by any chance knows what the real woman is going either to do or to say. The proof that her personality is not a creation or reflection of his own lies in this very sense of uncertainty and unexpectedness. The proof of the objective reality of the whole world of persons is just the same. The incalculable

<sup>1</sup> Flint's *Theism*, p. 60.

nature of their emotions, words, and acts convinces us that they are not a mere part of our own nature, creatures of our dream who would 'go out' if we ceased dreaming, but realities whose existence enlarges our own.

Now this is above all true about the God of the Bible. 'He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel,' and those ways and acts were totally unexpected and incalculable. His conduct, as they experienced it, was not capable of being anticipated by human reason. By what arguments or mental processes could men ever have arrived, for instance, at the idea of election; that the God who would make Himself known to mankind should choose one man, and his family, and the tribe which sprang from them, and use them as the channel through which the knowledge of Himself should be spread throughout the earth? It has taken men many centuries to see that it is consistent with justice that He should so act, or with a love that embraces all mankind. The patience that has waited and still waits for men to make known to one another what He has made known to some of them is only conceivable when we learn of it objectively. Men who make a God after their own likeness do not create such a figure as this; one which takes the thinking of long centuries to understand at all. Can we imagine any person or nation conceiving the being of a God who would establish with them a relation of grace and promise, rather than of law, and whose great requirement would be faith?

Human practice has created gods who one after another have perished from the contempt of their

worshippers. Human philosophy has produced theories of the being of God which are impressive enough as illustrations of the constructive power of the human mind. But they do not bring us within sight of a Character such as the Old Testament Scriptures present to us. The difficulty of Christian theology has always been that of bringing the 'living God,' the Person who claims us, loves us, commands us, and saves us, into any sort of relation with the philosophical conceptions of 'the Absolute,' 'the Eternal,' 'the One,' 'the Unknowable,' 'the Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness,' or whatever else the mind's construction might be. Nor have the deductions of the philosophers ever been of any great assistance to the life of faith.

That in the self-revelation of God to men a new Personality of immeasurable energy has touched ours is shown by the character which this revelation has produced in those who have received it. The true 'people of God' have been the moral and spiritual successes of history. They have attained the highest victories of the spirit. Their personality has developed and blossomed and borne the fruits of love and joy and peace, when the rest of mankind have stagnated and failed. They have found the peace which passeth understanding. They have subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. Trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment, have only brought out the fact that the world was not worthy of them. The testimony of this great cloud of witnesses culminates in that of Jesus of Nazareth. The deep conviction of mankind that in Him humanity has come to its true and

ultimate perfection is the measure of our certainty of the reality of the existence of the God whom He taught us to call 'our Father which art in heaven.'

The Ten Commandments afford us a very striking example of the essentially personal character of God's revelation of Himself. He introduces Himself to the people as their Friend and Saviour. 'I am Jehovah thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' He has done something for them; He has helped and delivered them. And He proceeds to make a great personal claim upon them: 'Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.' It is hard for us to realize how much He was asking. We can only very partially put ourselves back in imagination into the position of men who wanted to have other gods, or who were very much afraid indeed of not having other gods. The ancient religious temper was an inclusive and hospitable one. Another god might be one more friend, and a useful one. Moreover, to refuse worship to another god might be to make a powerful enemy. It must surely be better and safer to try to placate them all. One never knew what might happen. But here comes this great intolerant claim of a 'jealous God,' 'none other gods before Me.' How essentially and vitally personal it is! Nothing but love would want to make such a claim, and nothing but love would dare to do so.

The attitude of the Jew towards other religions was a standing puzzle to the ancient world. It was so inhospitable, so anti-social, that they declared that such a people must be the enemies of the human



race. The Nebuchadnezzar of the old story might well, from his own point of view, be full of rage and fury at the three who refused to worship his golden image. He himself would have been so ready upon occasion to do them the courtesy of worshipping their God. What but sheer insolence could prevent them from worshipping the one he had made? The conception of their being bound by a loyalty like that of a man to his wife could never have entered his head, because the notion that Jehovah was a Person who cared, and to whom His followers' loyalty was of consequence, had never come near him.

And all Jehovah's interests, as they are shown in the Ten Commandments, are personal too. It is the relation of His people to Himself and their personal character for which He cares. The only command in which this is not immediately obvious, the Sabbath command, is seen upon reflection to be in line with the others, for the value of the Sabbath rest is purely personal. The work-time is time for obtaining the means of life; the rest-time is time to live.

Two things emerge here which have much to do with our study of Personality and Fellowship. One is the fact of claim. Personality always involves rights and duties. We cannot come into any sort of contact with any one who is also possessed of personality without there immediately arising on both sides duties and claims. The first man who disputed this was, we are told, a murderer. But the full significance of it has perhaps never been realized.

The other fact is that of morality. It is indeed

part of the first, for righteousness is essentially a social thing. Only we must notice that the need for righteousness, and indeed the very idea of such a thing, arises from that personal claim on a person which is deeper than any morality. The sense of duty and claim binding together into one all persons who have any sort of contact with each other comes first, and is the source whence arises the whole conception of the Law of Righteousness.

An extremely valuable element of our Old Testament Scriptures is their frank anthropomorphism. In more reflective ages this perhaps would have been impossible, but it is hard to see how the full conception of a God who is essentially a Person could have been gained without it. We Christians must never forget that in our final revelation the Man Christ Jesus tells His disciples, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' It is in human shape, then, that we also can best learn to know God.

Jehovah is never a Being who could possibly be thought of as without consciousness or will. He *speaks* to call the world into existence, or to make Himself known to His people. He is thoroughly self-conscious, independent of the world, and possessed of absolute moral freedom. The ancient writers do not scruple to picture Him as possessed of human bodily organs and passions. They show, however, that they are well acquainted with the fact that such language is only an accommodation, for they insist steadfastly that He has no form and cannot be portrayed by any likeness. They have not yet clearly grasped the distinction between matter and spirit, but they certainly never mean to

suggest that God is in any degree entangled in material conditions. But they do mean that the great personal factors of Reason, Affection, and Will belong to the nature of God. He is a God of righteousness and love, of faithfulness and truth, of mercy and long-suffering. And He will by no means clear the guilty. He thinks, and thinks truly; He rules, and rules righteously; He loves, and that with a love that does not spare Himself. In all this He is like man, or, as the Bible more truly puts it, Man is made in the likeness of God.

Towards the end of the Old Testament times there grew up a tendency to represent God as being removed as far as possible from human conditions. Men were afraid to utter His name, and preferred to think of His action on the world as mediated by angels. This, however, is not an effect of growing revelation, but of a sense that the revelation is a thing of the past. Those who took this attitude did not think that God was speaking in their own days as He had done in the past. When God spoke again in His Son the note of personality was clearer than ever.

One great note of personality is that which M. Bergson calls 'duration.'<sup>1</sup> Personality means progress. For it the order of events can never be reversed. It is eternally moving forward, and carries all the past with it as it goes. This is represented in the Bible by the doctrine of God's great Purpose. He is guiding and governing the world and mankind with a view to a great Consummation towards which He is making everything

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free-will*, pp. 100, 104, &c.; *Creative Evolution*, pp. 5 ff., 11 ff.

tend. The current name which the prophets use for this great end of all things is the Day of Jehovah. Our Lord spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and New Testament writers of the Last Judgement and the World to Come. It is impossible to hold the biblical doctrine of the Personality of the Living God unless this idea of continuous progress towards a foreseen and chosen End is firmly grasped. The Bible always denies that God changes, but always insists on His purposeful government and His steadfastness, faithfulness, and patience in bringing about the supreme Event. We are not to judge of Him merely by what He has already accomplished, but to build on our experience of His ways a faith that expects greater things yet to come. We are not to estimate His wisdom and power merely by the world as it now exists, or to judge of His love by the present position of mankind. What He has already done shows His character sufficiently to enable us to trust Him and wait for what He is going to do.

One great criticism that has often been made on the Christian religion, that which points to the natural evils of the world as objections to the doctrine of the goodness of God, depends for its force mainly upon a misunderstanding here. People point to the jungle and the swamp, to the ceaseless cruelties of animal life, to the earthquake and the tempest, and ask how they can be reconciled with our faith in a God of love. If they pointed to a garden full of weeds, it would be perfectly obvious that the answer was that the garden would be well enough if the human owner did his work. We are living in an unfinished world. Mankind has received

a charge to replenish and subdue it, and when the human race has learned its lesson and done its work it may be that there will not be so much to find fault with. Perhaps God also has some more work to do Himself to the world yet. The 'closed order' of science is by no means a fully proved fact even for the material universe.

Everywhere in the Old Testament we are moving forward towards a goal that is future and distant ; and while the New Testament proclaims that the ancient goal is won, it makes its attainment the starting-point of a progress so vast that it can only be described in the language of vision and of hope. A second time it becomes true that eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things that God has laid up for them that love Him. Led by their unchanging God, the People and the Earth still go forward to a new and unimagined perfection which He is working out for them.

Until I read Bergson I never understood why this aspect of the character of God, that He is a Person with an End which He seeks and brings slowly to pass, should have proved so extremely difficult a crux for philosophy ; but I had always felt that philosophic theology failed here rather badly. It can get on very well with the idea of the unchanging unity of God ; but why He uses means, why His purposes have to ripen, why He does not put the world right with one great *coup*, it has never been able to say. Bishop Butler had a vision of the truth when he said that even Almighty God could not create a man with good habits. The fact is that we have been trying to explain God by means of *a priori* theories of omnipotence, and have missed the



explanation that lay open before us on every page of our Bibles.

No question is raised there as to His omnipotence with regard to the natural universe. He speaks, and it is done. There is no sense of effort whatever. But there is a sense of effort when we come to the personal world and to God's dealings with sinful men whom He desires to redeem. It is only at supreme cost to Himself that this is accomplished. It is vital to the Christian religion to maintain that He has done *all He can* to save men. He has given to the uttermost. But such teaching fits badly with the philosophic doctrine of omnipotence. The reason probably is that the latter conception belongs to the material and not to the personal world. The personal attribute is rather that of Sovereignty. God is a Person, and this great fact of Personality, that it involves duration, that living takes time, and that therefore the long-suffering of God waits, has been overlooked. It is, however, a matter of supremest importance for the doctrine of fellowship which we seek to build up. Ours is a God at work, One whose government is not merely a matter of rewards and punishments, but the leading of mankind forward to new and unreachd heights of attainment and blessedness, and the making of a World which is still unfinished into 'New Heavens and a New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.' He who 'led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron' is still the

Leader of faithful souls, and Guide  
Of all that travel to the sky.

Waiting for the accomplishment of His supreme

Purpose, 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting' . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 22, 23.

## CHAPTER III

Personal faithfulness to Jehovah—The Canaanites—The King of Israel—The Prophets—The first lesson in individualism—Jeremiah—Ezekiel—The individual's free access to God.

IN discussing the Ten Commandments we said that the sense of claim between person and person was deeper than the sense of morality, and that the Law of Righteousness grew out of that deeper sense. It seems as if the discipline of the Israelite people might be quoted in support of this thought. For the first lesson appears to have been that of personal faithfulness to their God, and this lesson was taught in such a form as shocks painfully our developed sense of moral right. The command given to the Israelites on their entry into Canaan to exterminate the inhabitants of the land has always been a difficulty to believers, nor can it be claimed that the suggestion here made entirely removes that difficulty. But it is surely worth while to try if we cannot make this ancient stumbling-block into a stepping-stone by means of which we may gain some insight into the ways of God with men.

That Israel should be exclusively devoted to Jehovah was surely necessary, if He was to train His people by means of His own personal relationship with them. Idolatry is so totally out of date and unthinkable to us that it is extremely hard to understand how deadly an enemy it was to a life

of fellowship between God and His people. But the Bible helps us to understand, if we will, something of the life-and-death nature of the struggle with it. The great story of Elijah on Mount Carmel should be recalled to mind here. So may the fierceness of the Book of Deuteronomy. That the most humane book of the Old Testament should become absolutely ruthless every time it touches the question of idolatry is a matter whose significance we have perhaps never duly pondered. But the book in which God does indeed 'take care for oxen,' and even for the mother bird and her nest, the book that preaches humanity to slaves and captive women and poor debtors, rings out with a repeated 'Thine eye shall not pity' as often as it comes across this never-to-be-tolerated sin. Let it be remembered also that even in our own day there is no more certain way of losing our own fellowship with God than by allowing ourselves to tolerate and become indifferent to the irreligious and anti-religious lives of those around us. Much of the religious life of England to-day is becoming asphyxiated because it cannot draw breath in the exhausted atmosphere of a society that declines to take any interest in the relation of its members to their God.

Fellowship with the Canaanite peoples meant religious fellowship. It was possible on no other terms. And religious fellowship with them meant that any intercourse with Jehovah was impossible. If that was worth preserving, these peoples must not be allowed to live in the land.

The question of the personal relation between Jehovah and His people comes to the front again with their desire for a king. For a king is a man

who in his own person symbolizes the unity of society. He is more than a symbol of it ; it is actively realized in the obedience he claims and the government he gives. The appointment of a king, then, touched vital religious issues, and the varying accounts in the Book of Samuel show us how important a moment it was in the development of the religion. That the king should be Jehovah's representative, as well as a man after His own heart, was a true solution of the difficulty, and not a mere patching up of a breach in the older undifferentiated conception of a People and a God. The idea of the King of Israel, therefore, passed into the religion as an enrichment of it, and a fertile source of new development yet to come. There was, however, a danger in it, that of exalting the king and the state at the expense of the people ; and from this danger nothing but the division of the kingdom could preserve Israel. This division disciplined Judah and its king, by leaving them impoverished and insignificant while Samaria prospered and became the home of prophecy. It disciplined Samaria also by the continual breakdowns of its self-chosen dynasties, and by the fact that its prophets could not successfully maintain the vitally important war against the baser forms of religion. And all the while the sense that it was wrong for the one People of God to be thus disunited slowly deepened. And when the Captivity completed the course of discipline, the hearts of the whole people turned back to the House of David with a chastened and transfigured hope in which the figure of the ideal King of Israel became an essentially religious one, vitally connected with the salvation of Jehovah. Meanwhile



the prophets in both kingdoms found that they had another foe to fight, as dangerous as that of idolatry. For growing wealth accentuated the divisions of society, and luxury and oppression showed themselves as the deadly enemies of all unity among the people. And lack of humanity to each other took its place alongside of lack of love to God as the great twin theme of the prophetic denunciations.

The complaint the prophets of Israel made against the People was that Israel did not know Jehovah. And they meant by knowledge exactly that kind of knowledge which this book is written to discuss. It is one which does not arise from an intellectual construction of facts acquired through the senses. It is a knowledge which comes from within ; ' from the heart,' as their own phrase goes. It is intimately bound up with the personal sense of duty and of claim. It can never be the experience of the disobedient and defiant man, or of him who persistently neglects his own personal intercourse with God. We want to show that the knowledge of God which the prophets desiderate is precisely that kind of knowledge which, both with regard to God and our fellows, is the fundamental necessity of all religious life and growth.

For the prophets themselves this inner knowledge of God meant very marked and wonderful progress in their own soul's life. Through the tragic failure of his own married life Hosea won his way to the conception of God as ashamed and broken-hearted over Israel's sin, driven to punish by His own sense of duty, and yet crying ' How can I give thee up ? ' Isaiah, with perhaps less of this poignant sense of

personal affection, yet realizes God as interested in all the political and social activity of His people, and desirous to reason with them, and justify His discipline to their own consciences. But it is with Jeremiah that the life of full personal intercourse with God comes into full daylight, and then with most startling clearness. For Jeremiah disputes with God, complains of Him, and even attacks Him. In a series of most vivid word-pictures we are allowed to witness an inner intimate soul-life, which, if it sometimes utterly shocks us by the unbridled freedom of remonstrance with God which it reveals, at the same time bears unmistakable witness to the fact that the relation between God and His servant was essentially and fundamentally one of frank personal intercourse.

All this, however, is thoroughly disintegrating that old conception of the solidarity of the People of God with which we started. The Individual is finding himself, and as he does so it seems at first as if only God and himself counted. Our first great lesson in individualism comes from the personality of the Prophets. In the interests of Jehovah they stand out often alone, against not only the King and the politicians, or against the masses of the people, but even against the Priesthood and the traditional national religion. Their supreme confidence that they have authority for what they are saying fascinates us. Their cry is, 'Thus saith Jehovah.' But when the question is asked how the people are to know that it is indeed Jehovah who is speaking through the prophet, it does not appear at all easy to give an answer. Why should anybody believe the word of Micaiah the son of Imlah more than

that of Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah?<sup>1</sup> It becomes obvious that the final answer can only be that the people themselves possess the faculty, if they will use it, of recognizing the Word of Jehovah directly, as the eye recognizes sunlight. Practically all messages from God come through individuals. The social consciousness is not the medium of fresh revelations, but is possessed of authority and power to discriminate among those revelations which come through individuals, and to recognize that which is authentic and binding. So St. Paul and St. John bid Christian congregations judge and prove the spirits. But the direct relation of the individual prophet to God remains as a great lesson in the spiritual importance of the single person. Israel may be doomed to captivity, and its City and Temple to destruction, but Jeremiah is still God's man and Jehovah is his God, whatever may come to the nation. It is not too much to say that the disintegrating effect of the discovery and development of Personal Religion upon the conception of the Unity of the People of God has continued right down to our own day. Indeed, the problem to which this book is intended to draw attention is just this, that Personal Religion and closest, fullest Fellowship are indeed not inconsistent, as they have so often seemed to be, but truly parts of each other, and either of them incomplete alone. Let it be said at once that the gain of Personal Religion, which is Fellowship on its highest side, Fellowship with God, is so supremely great that there can be no question for a moment of sacrificing that personal distinctness and freedom of soul upon

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 11 ff.

which it is based. Our theorem is that this distinctness and freedom of individuality is not only compatible with the closest bonds of fellowship, but that it cannot arrive at its own fullest maturity anywhere else than in membership of the great People of God. It is just because Jeremiah so deeply and passionately loves his people, and is, indeed, willing to die with them rather than seek life by leaving them to their fate, that he is able to 'know' God well enough to live with Him that intimate, unreserved personal life of which we have been speaking.

The religious problem of the individual is stated in the most uncompromising terms by Ezekiel.<sup>1</sup> His declaration that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father of the son, seems to be in flat contradiction to the facts of daily experience. We are ready to say that the exact opposite of what he tells us is the case, and that nobody ever does himself reap the harvest either of his own sins or of his own good deeds. But for all this, Ezekiel's words are unreservedly and completely true from the point of view from which he spoke them. It is, therefore, a great matter for us to see things for a while from just that special point of view. Now if we will substitute for Ezekiel's words 'shall surely live' and 'shall surely die' the ideas 'shall have personal fellowship of mutual love with God' or 'shall surely and totally lose that fellowship,' we can see that every word he says is literally and accurately true. The wicked man who turns away from his wickedness does enter into that fellowship, and the righteous man who

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii.



turns away from his righteousness loses it. And the son's possession or loss of it does not depend at all upon his father's conduct. Every individual man is as near to God as the others; each can turn to Him and will assuredly find Him, each may turn away and will certainly lose Him. Once grasp the fact that what we are here dealing with is personal relationship and personal relationship alone, and the whole doctrine becomes clear and luminous. But it is just this very fact, namely that what we are dealing with is personal relationship and personal relationship alone, that is so hard to grasp. Is it too much to say that whoever fails to grasp it fails to understand the innermost meaning of our holy religion? 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.'<sup>1</sup>

The question of fellowship with each other may wait, and must always take second place. The first great commandment is to love God; the supreme thing in the Christian religion is that mystic union in which our Self at its deepest and fullest is one with Him. But we must judge of the height of this mountain peak by all that is below us, and not think that we have left the common earth because we are above it; for we are standing on it all the while. Below us is not only the World, with the life that means intellectual interest in understanding it, aesthetic interest in appreciating and enjoying it, and ethical active interest in dominating and reshaping it; below us is also Society with the Home where we *do* bear one another's burdens, and find it a blessed thing to do so; and the Community where

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 3.



our teeth *are* set on edge by the sour grapes others have eaten, and where the wisdom of one little-noticed man will again and again save our city for us. The mountain of God rises above even these great things, but it is not parted from them. Rather is it securely based on them, for God and People and World form one great unity, though God is supreme.

From henceforward we have to deal with this great fact of the free access of the individual soul to God and its right of fellowship with Him ; and any theory of fellowship with each other that does not make full room for that fact will break to pieces on it. How many 'doctrines of the Church' have already done so ! But we are left with an incomplete and one-sided conception of our religion if we ignore that great idea of the 'body of Christ' which uses the very truth of personal freedom and individual relation to God as the material with which to build its nobler temple, the supreme holiness of which depends on the fact that all its constituents are 'living stones.'

## CHAPTER IV

The shadow of Sin—The ' people ' divided—The sour grapes of Exile—Second Isaiah's solution—The old corporate religion completely broken up—Is there a new society?—The Covenant and its failure—The New Covenant.

THE ever-deepening shadow of sin falls over the whole history of Jehovah's dealings with His People and His Land. At first it is felt as corporate, and the People seeks to purge itself by destroying the offending member, as in the case of Achan. And even when sin appears as definitely individual the thought persists that the sinner must be ' cut off ' ; not so much, perhaps, at first for his own sake as for the protection of the body. But as soon as the prophets denounced with equal voice sin against God and sin against man, idolatry, and oppression, the need of differentiation began to assert itself. When Ahab established the worship of the Sidonian Baal he ' made Israel to sin,' but when he robbed Naboth of his life and property the guilt was his own, and the nation was not in any true sense a partner in it. The oppression of the poor divides the people into two camps ; there are the ' poor and needy,' who are innocent sufferers, on the one hand, and the selfish rich, availing themselves of the machinery of government to make their tyranny more complete, on the other. Israel is no longer a unity ; and while it is felt that God must judge the State for public crime, another thought arises of Him

as the Vindicator of the humble and meek who are oppressed. Isaiah's doctrine of 'the remnant' is an early declaration on these lines; and though it appears to have borne little immediate fruit, yet a great harvest awaited it later on. The distinction shows itself fully in the case of Jeremiah. Not that his classification of the exiles of the first captivity as the 'good figs,' while the people left behind in Jerusalem are rotten ones, can fairly be quoted. They are after all two groups, and the group in Babylon contained individuals whom Jeremiah sternly denounced, while in Jerusalem were men like Baruch and Ebedmelech, to whom he promised personal safety and blessing. But it is his own case which decisively brings out the true nature of the issue. The corporate sin of Jerusalem was incurable and indelible. The habit of faithlessness to God was ingrained as the black skin of the Ethiopian, and doom, therefore, was irrevocable. But the prophet himself is one of the people. He neither can nor will forsake them, whatever evil may come. Yet he is God's man, walking in the innermost sanctuary of fellowship with his Maker. He suffers with his people, and at the same time abides under the shadow of the Almighty. Both fellowships endure, though they seem totally inconsistent with each other. A new element has shown itself in our complex problem.

The experiences of Exile raise a question bearing closely on this. The first exiles felt that they were suffering the deserved penalty of the sin which was at the same time their nation's and their own. But the children born in captivity ask, as they grow up, why they also should be punished.

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,’ they say, ‘and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ Ezekiel answers them with that wonderful assertion of their own unimpaired personal right of access to God and assurance of life in Him which we have already discussed; but it will be seen that great as this doctrine is, it leaves the problem of their common sufferings, as members of a community under punishment, untouched. Towards the close of the Exile there arose, however, another prophet, the unnamed man of God whom we are getting accustomed to call the Second Isaiah, to whom was granted an insight into the very heart of God, in the light of which this problem disappears. He boldly declares that the People are not now being punished at all—they have already received at Jehovah’s hand double for all their sins.<sup>1</sup> But they are suffering for the sake of humanity, in order that they may become God’s missionary Servant to all mankind. For a moment at least the highest peaks come into full view here. God will have all men to be saved, and sin can be overcome by the vicarious suffering of love. The problem of individuality and the problem of sin are both overtopped. We are again in

the shining table-lands  
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.

The ‘People of God’ is a unity, one which embraces all mankind, and has both room and need for the individual self-determination of each child of God. And there is power to save to the uttermost. Not for long does the vision tarry. We soon descend

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 2, xlix. 6.

again to a people who cared much for getting back to Jerusalem, but failed to grasp the idea of saving the world. Even if some echoes of the thought that all nations should come to Zion remained, the peoples were to come 'bending,' and to become their 'plowmen and vinedressers.' But when the vision of the highest has been seen, though but for a moment, the world has been permanently changed.

Still, it seems as if Ezekiel's individualism, especially when its full consequences are brought out in the great Christian doctrine of justification by faith, completely breaks up the old corporate Jewish religion, and reduces it, to use Burke's fine phrase, 'to the dust and powder of individuality.' Every man must come to God for himself, and every man has through Christ free access to the Holiest of all. No plea of spiritual privilege ('Thou didst teach in our streets') or claim to be Abraham's seed is to avail for a moment. God is able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham. It is the attitude of the individual soul, turning with the freedom of personal self-direction towards God in submission, obedience, and trust, that alone counts. No conception of a 'people' or a 'church' which in any degree clashes with, or even ignores, this free decision of the will can endure the light of New Testament teaching. Against a gospel which expresses itself in such invitations as 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' or 'He that will, let him take the water of life freely,' all claims to stand between the soul and God, except the claim of the one Mediator who is Himself the Way, are impertinent and invalid.

But are we, then, to understand that the great



unity of the Chosen People of God is finally dissolved into mere individualism, or even that the greater importance of personal self-determination makes the corporate unity of the People of God a consideration of secondary importance? That was not the mind of Ezekiel, nor the teaching of the New Testament. The prophet who went on from his lofty doctrine of individual responsibility to plan his new and better temple wherein a holy God might indeed dwell in the midst of a redeemed and purified people assuredly did not so conceive the effect of his own teaching. And this last conception of Ezekiel's reappears in the New Testament in St. Paul's teaching that the Christian Church as a whole grows 'into a holy temple in the Lord,'<sup>1</sup> in St. John's great statement that the Word 'tabernacled among us,'<sup>2</sup> and in the seer's final vision, with its declaration that 'the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.'<sup>3</sup> Those great lonely acts of human will in which personal choice asserts itself most clearly as self-determined, and neither calculable nor controllable from without, are acts of acceptance of union with some fellowship, and of rejection of some other fellowship or union which is seen to be inconsistent with the one chosen. The Moses who refuses to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and chooses to suffer affliction with the people of God, is the typical free man making his choice. Alone he does it, alone he must do it; but the moment's loneliness only emphasizes the permanent membership of the Society, out of which

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 21.<sup>2</sup> John i. 14.<sup>3</sup> Rev. xxi. 3.

he sprang, and which is his now by the far stronger bond of his living will to belong to it.

We may turn back here to one great religious idea of the Old Testament that we have not yet named, that of the Covenant between God and His people. This also lifts the thought of His relation to them on to the high plane of personal choice and will. The God who makes a covenant must be a self-determined Person capable of saying 'I will,' and of keeping His word. He must be a God who can act, as Ezekiel says, 'for His holy name's sake.' It must concern Him to save the people He has promised to save, and to bring to pass that time of glory and blessing for which He has encouraged them to hope. The extremely naïve retort of Moses to the threat that He would destroy Israel, 'Then the Egyptians shall hear it,'<sup>1</sup> brings this point out admirably. He has undertaken to bring His people through, and His character (and may one dare to say His reputation?) are pledged to His success.

But the early conceptions of the Covenant, though they have in them much truth of high religious value, are imperfect, limited, and open to misconception. A covenant sounds like a contract or bargain. Perhaps our sense of the inadequacy of any commercial agreement to express the relation between God and His people prevents us from realizing what a great stage of progress was gained when that idea took its place in the religious life of mankind. For it brought into religion the great thoughts of right and duty. One might almost say that both the conceptions of obedience and of faith sprang from it. 'If we have made a covenant with

<sup>1</sup> Num. xiv. 13.

our God,' men must have argued, 'we owe Him the obedience we have promised, and we have a right to trust Him for the deliverance He has promised us. He is pledged, and so are we.' Now what has gone wrong with the commercial idea of a bargain is the thought that it can be kept with an estranged heart. It is a pledge to 'deliver the goods,' and 'if I have done that,' we say, 'I may think and feel as I like.' Probably that is not finally true of the coldest bargaining that ever established a 'cash-nexus' between strangers; but it seems true, and has led men astray.

The final strain on the covenant idea came to the Israelites, however, from the other side. They could not 'deliver the goods;' they were hopelessly bankrupt. They had broken the covenant so repeatedly, so completely, so permanently, that from the bargain point of view there was absolutely nothing left but the exaction of the penalty.

And then Jeremiah had his wonderful vision of the New Covenant.<sup>1</sup> Their pledges were utterly broken, but God's pledge endured, for it was the pledge of redeeming love. He had promised to save His people, and He would take upon Himself the full burden of their salvation. Their hearts were bad? Yes, but He would change their hearts. Their sins cried out for judgement? Yes, but He would forgive their sins. It is only one more step to the New Testament: He would bear them Himself. When the Covenant grace on God's part is thus changed from the righteous keeping of His given word to the will to save and the attitude of redeeming love, the covenant virtue on man's

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31.

part becomes the will to be saved, or faith. Obedience is no longer secured as part of the bond ; it is given as the willing offering of the new heart.

But where does the solidarity of the Covenant People come in? There is no doubt as to the extension of the term. It is 'all men everywhere' who are commanded to change their minds and turn to God. But what do they mean to one another? We *feel* that it is somehow true that the body broken for us makes us one body, that the love shed abroad in our hearts binds us to our fellows as surely as it binds us to God. But is there any compelling need of each other, any sense that we are incomplete without each other, and that the true life can only be lived as a common one, that will compare, say, with the sense that the ancient Israelite had that it was as a member of his nation that he was in covenant with God and God with him? Do we receive God's love along with our fellows and as part of their company? I think we do, and that this New Covenant relation to a God who has pledged Himself to save us, and whom we are pledged to trust and love, can only be lived truly and fully in the company and as a part of the life of the People of God.

## CHAPTER V

The effect of the coming, the death and resurrection of Christ—The personality of God fully revealed in a supreme act of love—The Nature of God as Trinity—The central position of Christ and His Cross—The People of God and freedom of access—The Middle Wall of Partition broken down—Believers become Israel—The fact of sin decisively dealt with—Final impenitence—The Land and the World to Come—The transition, though immeasurably great, still preserves identity with the Old Testament conceptions of God, People, and Land.

WE must pause just here to consider what effect upon our religious universe, God and People and Land, is produced by the great Divine Act and Deed of which our New Testament is the record and interpretation. The Coming and the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the Gift of the Spirit: how do these events modify the conception we have before us? Our answer must perforce be both incomplete and inadequate, but must be given, however imperfectly.

With regard to God, then, these supreme events strengthen beyond measure the evidence of His living Personality. Here is personal action at its highest, a deed done at immeasurable cost, a deed revealing a personal interest of love to His people, 'whose depth unfathomed no man knows.' It is not a mere isolated action coming after a long pause. It is the climax to which the whole ancient story leads up, the crown of all the divine activity of the



past. It is so revealing of personal character that we now speak of God by a new name, that of Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father. It has made us confident that we know His character better than it was known by the holiest and best of the old order. We still gladly learn what they have to tell us of His ways, but we feel that we have a key to their own experiences of His doings which they did not possess themselves.

Moreover, 'He whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world' convinced His disciples by His life and deeds that He was truly the Son of God. They could find no place for Him lower than the throne itself. They realized that in coming to Him they had truly come to God and found rest for their souls. And in the fullness of time the Promised Spirit came to them, and came as His Gift. And they began to realize that this Gift was more than a gift, was indeed a personal indwelling of God Himself. They witnessed that Jesus Christ was God, the Holy Spirit was God, the Father was God, and yet there were not three Gods, but one God. It took centuries before they succeeded in stating the metaphysical implications of this new experience, but one does not have to wait for the Council of Nicaea for the experience itself. It is there in the New Testament. God is One, and God is a Society. In Him Personal Life exists in its highest perfection.

And Christ has become the central figure of the Universe. The writer of the Revelation sees the slain Lamb 'in the midst of the throne,' that is to say central with regard to God;<sup>1</sup> 'in the midst

<sup>1</sup> Rev. v. 6.

of the four and twenty elders,' that is to say central with regard to the human race ; ' in the midst of the four living creatures,' that is to say central with regard to universal life. So St. Paul says that it is the good pleasure of God to sum up all things in Christ.<sup>1</sup> King of the Kingdom of Heaven, He takes the place faintly shadowed forth by the King of Israel. Since His coming there is no thinking of the unity and solidarity of the human race, or of its relation to God and to the World, except in Him ; nor is there any way of dealing with the terrible ruin wrought by sin except through His cross. The cross of Christ becomes in very fact the bond that draws all men to God, and to one another, and to Him.

With regard to the People of God, the great New Testament facts are not less decisive. First of all the rights and responsibilities of individual freedom are brought into clearest relief. For the way of salvation is ' by faith,' and the condemnation is to turn away from the light. Both faith and the rejection of the light are matters of personal choice, with regard to which the soul must take its own lonely way.

In the next place the racial boundary of the People is decisively broken down, and ' every creature ' is to hear the good news of God's great act of love. At the same time there is no uncertain sound as to the Unity of the People of God. If the Middle Wall of Partition is broken down, there is no tampering with the fence between lovers of the darkness and lovers of the light. The outsiders are admitted into a greater Israel, and are assured that they are heirs

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 10.

of all the ancient promises of God. They are members of the body of Christ, and therefore members one of another; and the blessedness that awaits them is a corporate realization in Christ of a nearer communion still with their Father and God and with each other. He has prepared for them a city in which their common fellowship shall be perfect, and He Himself will dwell with them and be their God.

The terrible fact of sin is met by God's great act and deed of love. Christ died for our sins, and by means of His death God is finally able to overcome sin. His weapon for destroying it is forgiveness, a forgiveness which brings with it a change of heart that means the death of sin. There is still room for all the discipline of life, and there still exists the greatest peril for those who forget God, or fail to put their trust in Him. But the victory won on Calvary is definite and final, and the 'dominion' of sin is gone for all who are willing to put their trust in Christ.

The dread problem of final impenitence remains a mystery of horror. Again and again we find statements and assurances of God's final and complete triumph; but we find also words about the outer darkness where there is wailing, and it seems as if it were intended that we should not be able to pierce that darkness. That God is absolutely intolerant of sin, and that His final victory is complete, we may be sure. And as to whether men can or will permanently reject His love, and as to what will happen if they do so, we have no light to guide us except the words of Christ, which we had better leave in all their own solemn force.

With regard to the third element in the Hebrew Cosmos, the Land, the development created by the great New Testament facts is at first a very puzzling one. There is, to begin with, a most remarkable extension of area. The whole visible universe might fairly be regarded as included already in the Hebrew conception in its highest forms. But Christianity needs also the 'World to come.' Our fundamental ideas about space and time are neither of them comprehensive enough for its Kingdom of Heaven. So it speaks of new heavens and a new earth, and anchors its hope 'within the veil,' in a region which at present we can only visit by faith. This appeal to 'another country' has a tremendous effect upon the idea of fellowship. We 'are come unto Mount Zion . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect.'<sup>1</sup> In a word, the fellowship is no longer merely a brief, fragmentary, limited experience, confined to the accidental groups brought together and parted again by time and space, but it has become eternal and complete.

This great enlargement of the Christian prospect has brought with it a difficulty similar to that which arose along with the realization of the value and importance of the individual. Just as that obscured the thought of the people, transforming it so that it seemed for the time to be lost altogether, so the 'other world' of the gospel has turned attention away from the material universe, and apparently reduced largely its religious value. Even now it is only slowly and in fragmentary fashion that we are regaining the true estimate of the spiritual importance

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 22-23.

of the solid earth that we tread upon, just as we are also slowly regaining a worthy idea of the value of existing human societies. We see, then, that the three great concepts of God and People and Land endure, but in each case a marvellous change passes over them.

Jehovah becomes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Christian people from the first, as they look back on the past, say, 'So He always was.' They see the action of Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit in all the old records. Of course, if this be taken in the sense that the ancient prophets themselves were aware that such a development of the knowledge of God was coming, it cannot be defended. The boy is not aware of the kind of man that he surely will become, though we, looking back, can see the man already there in his boyhood's days. And in this highest and truest sense it was indeed the day of Christ which Abraham saw when he offered his son upon the altar. It was the reproach of Christ which Moses preferred to the riches of Egypt. The New Testament is *coming to be* all through the days of the Old.

The People of God become 'whosoever will.' Yet Paul is supremely right in his contention that they are the circumcision, the true Israel, heirs of all the promises that were made to Abraham. The transition here also is a tremendous one, but it is a transition of life. The earlier structure has made itself into the later one as the inevitable result of the vital development in which the will of God led it forward.

The Land widens out into the World to Come. It must be maintained that the Epistle to the Hebrews



does after all truly interpret the Book of Genesis when it says of the patriarchs that they 'looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,'<sup>1</sup> and gives the deepest meaning of the eighth Psalm when it switches off the dominion over the earth, which it promises, to 'the world to come, whereof we speak.'<sup>2</sup> This immense extension of the conception of the Home of the human race and of the boundaries of life is really involved in the simplest hopes of patriarchal piety. If God was indeed their God, nothing less than Heaven and Eternity can give them room for their life, whether they were actually conscious of the fact or not. Such 'dominion' as will actually enable man to fully realize himself must reach out beyond the present material world to that 'world that puts this world right,' which baffles our thought while it inspires all our hopes for our future and our race.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 5.

PART II  
**THEORETICAL**



## CHAPTER VI

Recapitulation—We are ourselves part of the movement of life, and cannot get outside it—An attempt at classification—Persons and things—Is all life personal?—The soul—Attempts at definition—Values.

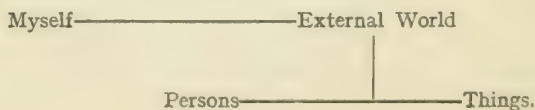
WE have already seen how in our Bible the whole cosmos of God and People and Land is essentially a living 'movement.' God is alive and active, the People have a history and are adding to it, and the very Land changes with the years. We have seen the great culminating act and deed of God in sending His Son into the world, and in sending the Spirit of His Son, and have recognized that this is a New Beginning rather than an end of the great Progress we are trying to understand.

We need to recognize that we are ourselves a part of it. Our life is essentially progress, is indeed a part of that one great progress which has God for Leader and Guide. And none of us can approach the study of it from outside. We cannot detach ourselves and investigate with a cold judicial disinterestedness that is willing to accept truth when discovered, but in the meantime is indifferent as to the side on which the balance shall finally descend. If that be the only attitude from which there is hope of discovering truth, scientific investigation of material things and forces may indeed be possible to us, but not the exploration of the things of God, of religion, or of social life. We are a part of the movement when we are resisting it, or striving to

detach ourselves from it, or to understand it, just as surely as when we are allowing it to carry us with it, or adding our strength to its force. What is said here, then, must be taken, not as an endeavour to prove something, but rather to interpret the position in which we find ourselves, in the light of the religious experience that is stored up in our Bibles and of as much modern psychological and social investigation as we can avail ourselves of.

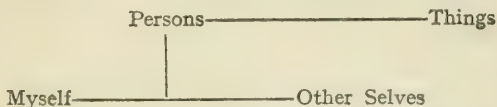
The nature of human society and the relation of the individual person to society is, of course, an enormously large and difficult subject. But I am sure we ought to try to get some clear and trustworthy elementary ideas about it, if we want to realize the importance of the church to the believer, or, as I prefer to put it, the value of fellowship to the spiritual life.

Let us see if we can establish a satisfactory natural classification. One to which a good many of us have been accustomed begins by making a distinction between the individual and the outside world. This is based upon the deep difference between the warm, intimate, immediate knowledge that each of us possesses of himself, and the colder, mediate, inferential knowledge which we possess of the outside world. The next division to be made in the external world is that between persons and things, a distinction whose depth and importance cannot be stated too strongly. The classification then will run like this :





Now I want to suggest that this is not the most natural or helpful classification, and that the following one has far more value as a means for getting at the truth about our relation to persons and things :



Let us look at the difference between the two methods. According to the first one the deepest distinction we can make is that between our knowledge of our own individual personality, and our knowledge of all besides. But according to the second the deepest distinction we can find is that between persons and things ; and the distinction between our individual self and other persons is a subordinate one, deep as it is, in comparison with the gulf that divides all persons from all things. It matters a great deal which method of classification we believe to be the better one when we come to deal with the relation of the individual to society. If each one of us, to begin with, stands alone against the whole universe of God, and only comes to recognize afterwards a distinction between two parts of that outside world, the persons who are like us in consciousness, will, and love, and the unconscious, inert, joyless things, that puts us much farther off from our fellows than we are if, to begin with, we are part of a fellowship of persons in a world of things, and our individual distinctness from the others in our society is secondary to that greater distinctness which separates us all from the things that do not live and act and achieve as we do.

The fundamental nature of the distinction between persons and things only grows more apparent as each successive thinker deals with it. The writings of Bergson have brought out with great emphasis the distinction between the living and the inorganic, though he seems to think that it will finally appear that the whole material universe has a career which can only be thought of as a kind of life. He lays great emphasis on what he calls 'duration.' Time has an altogether different position in the case of living creatures from that which it has in the case of things. Any material substance, as, for example, a drop of water, may undergo many changes of form, but it is not changed in itself as living things change. It is not tired, or grown old, but being restored to its original condition, will be, at the end of time, precisely the same fresh, unspoiled drop of water that it was on the first day of creation. How different from the case of a man! For him the clock can never be put back. He can never for a moment return to what he was at an earlier stage of his history. He is deeply changed, to the very heart of him, by the course of life. Yet through all this change he 'endures.' He is *one* throughout his life, with an individuality which never belonged to the drop of water that was always able and ready to return to its first condition.

Now it is obvious that, as Bergson says, this is true in some measure of all living things. But with regard to all the lower forms of life it is worth while stopping to ask what it is that 'endures.' The material elements which compose the 'body' in which life clothes itself do not get tired or worn out, although the body which they form certainly does.

There is no mistaking the difference of condition between the body of an old man and a child, and yet the oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon of which both are composed will revert to their original condition as readily as the drop of water of which we first spoke. What is it, then, that grows old? For the old eyes cannot see like the young ones, nor the old feet run so fast. It seems as if life obtains a temporary hold on the matter taken up into a body, but is at length compelled to let it go again. But the life itself which endures, and changes, and while growing and changing possesses the most real unity we know anything about, where shall we place that, and how shall we measure it?

Now in its full perfection, as *personal* life we know it more intimately than anything in the world. For to each one of us it is Myself, Yourself, Himself, or Herself, and it is as Personal Life that I want to discuss it. True, that leaves out some fascinatingly interesting questions, and questions as difficult as fascinating. How far does personality go down the scale of life? Is there any possibility that it exists throughout the whole range of the living? Bergson says that all the lower forms of life are, as it were, aspiring after individuality without completely attaining it. Sir Oliver Lodge says that life 'by some means at present unknown is able to interact with the material world for a time, but it can also exist in some sense independently; although in that condition of existence it is by no means apprehensible by our senses. It is dependent on matter for its phenomenal appearance—for its manifestation to us here and now, and for all its terrestrial activities; but otherwise I conceive that

it is independent of matter. I argue that its essential existence is continuous and permanent, though its interactions with matter are discontinuous and temporary.<sup>1</sup> But he does not know how to maintain this possibility of existence apart from matter with regard to the very lowest forms of life.

The fact that such questions are raised, and will claim answers which cannot be given to-day, ought not, however, to hinder us from doing such thinking as we can. For myself I make the frankest confession of inability to deal with them, and then go on to try to think out more important matters still !

When we get to life in its highest earthly form, personal life, language comes to our assistance with a name for that which 'endures,' and, throughout a life of change and growth, upon no moment of which is there any possibility of return, maintains the truest unity and individuality we know anything about. It is the 'Soul.' We may remind ourselves that in our Greek New Testament the word for Soul and Life is the same, and, if possible, it is in that New Testament sense that I would like to use the word here. It is that which the man in the parable addressed when he said to himself, '*Life*, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.'<sup>2</sup> It is that of which Christ spoke when he said, 'Take no thought for your *soul*, what ye shall eat,'<sup>3</sup> and 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own *life*?'<sup>4</sup>

'Soul,' 'Life,' 'Personality,' that is what I want to consider. It is of little use trying to define it ;

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Matter*, Lodge, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Mark viii. 36.

if we could do that successfully perhaps there would be little reason for wanting to discuss it. But we may name some of the best recognized marks belonging to it. Rationality was one of the first to be recognized. Self-consciousness, the consciousness of identity throughout the changes of a life-career, is another. Closely connected with this is memory, which makes the past experience available for present need. To Kant personality meant moral freedom, independence of the mechanical universe, the being 'an end in one's self,' and having responsibility for one's actions. Eucken holds that 'it is a fundamental belief in spiritual life and its contents and value which has created in this term (person) an instrument however inadequate.' Let us add that a person is one who can love and be loved. For we are just as conscious that it is only to one who is possessed of full personality that love can be given as we are that only such a one can give it. Then we shall have to add the capacity for righteousness and moral goodness, and also for the appreciation of truth and beauty.

These last-named marks of personality bring out an aspect of it which obtains much prominence in current thinking. It is only to persons that there are any *values* in the universe. The differences between truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness, righteousness and unrighteousness, goodness and badness, only exist for them. For material things there are no such differences of value, no reason why hot is better or worse than cold, quiet than movement, building up than breaking down, or development than disintegration. Preferences and the existence of values from which preferences arise



are only to be found in the personal world. This last mark of personality raises again, however, that mysterious problem of the boundaries of personality from which we cannot entirely escape. For every living thing seems to have a will to live which looks as though it was capable of attaching a *value* to life, an attitude quite different from anything we can find in any part of the inorganic world. If a horse, driven along a road, should find in front of him a swing-bridge swinging open, so that to go forward means to be plunged into the river below, he will swerve or stop if it be at all possible. He obviously does not want to perish in the river. If, however, it be a railway train in front of which the bridge is open, the engine will go on without hesitation, until it is stopped by the resulting catastrophe. It is driven from behind, and will go forward while the power lasts, without any interest in the question whether it is going to destruction or to safety. The horse, although in part driven from behind, is also influenced by what is before it. It has a purpose or End, that of safety. The engine has no such purpose. So far as we can tell, it matters nothing to it whether it remains an engine or becomes a heap of broken, rusted metal.

In all the purposive life of men the motive for their actions is not that the events which have already happened necessitate such and such a sequel, so much as that the events which they desire to happen in the future require such and such preparation. They are drawn forward by what they hope for, more than compelled by what they have been. They attach values to experiences, and seek them for the sake of those values.

## CHAPTER VII

The relations of persons to Society—F. E. Jevons on the community—The child learns himself there—Pestalozzi on the child and its mother—The child learns himself too—Baldwin's outline of the process—The Self-thought has two poles, one for the Ego, one for the Alter, but the thought is one—Justice and Sympathy are part of the Self-thought—The knowledge of God—Summary.

THE special matter which I wish to discuss about persons is their relation to one another. But Society is just as difficult a matter to define as Personality itself. Here, for instance, is a modern putting of the beginning of the relationship of an individual to Society. It is the first paragraph of one of the new Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature :

Every child that is born is born of a community, and into a community, which existed before his birth, and will continue to exist after his death. He learns to speak the language which the community spoke before he was born, and which the community will continue to speak after he has gone. In learning the language he acquires not only words but ideas ; and the words and ideas he acquires, the thoughts he thinks, and the words in which he utters them, are those of the community from which he learnt them, which taught them before he was born, and will go on teaching them after he is dead. He not only learns to speak the words and think the ideas, to reproduce the mode of thought, as he does the form of

speech, of the circumambient community: he is taught and learns to act as those around him do—as the community has done and will tend to do. The community of the family first—and afterwards the wider community to which the family belongs—teaches him how he ought to speak, what he ought to think, and how he ought to act. The consciousness of the child reproduces the consciousness of the community to which he belongs—the common consciousness, which existed before him, and will continue to exist after him.

The common consciousness is not only the source from which the individual gets his mode of speech, thought, and action, but the court of appeal which decides what is fact. If a question is raised whether the result of a scientific experiment is what it is alleged by the original maker of the experiment to be, the appeal is to the common consciousness: any one who chooses to make the experiment in the way described will find the result to be of the kind alleged; if every one else, on experiment, finds it to be so, it is established as a fact of common consciousness; if no one else finds it to be so, the alleged discovery is not a fact but an erroneous inference.<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered at once that in these paragraphs one factor of primary importance is entirely omitted, that namely of the reaction of the individual upon the words, thoughts, behaviour, and accepted facts of the community. For the personal energy, vision, and choice of the individuals are continuously modifying that social life which is here regarded as stable and permanent. But

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God in Early Religions*, F. E. Jevons, Litt. D.

allowing for this, and taking the paragraphs as simply stating the other side, we may accept them as a useful putting of the case.

But for our purpose these statements do not go deep enough. It is not merely the words, thoughts, and behaviour of the community that the child learns in this way. He learns also in the same way the knowledge of himself as a person, and the knowledge of those around him as also persons. The distinction between persons and things begins to be made—the deepest distinction there is in human knowledge—and with it the recognition of the self as one of the company of persons. There are two points here of the greatest importance for the purpose of this lecture, and it will be best to state them as definite propositions to be carefully considered and investigated. The first is that our knowledge of persons is a different kind of knowledge from our knowledge of things; and the second that this knowledge which we have of persons is a whole, within which the knowledge which we have of ourselves is a not wholly separate part. In a word, we know other people with the same kind of knowledge with which we know ourselves, and not, for all social and religious purposes, with the kind of knowledge with which we know things.

Before investigating these two statements, however, let us complete our sketch of the manner in which these kinds of knowledge first come to us. To do this we will first avail ourselves of some words of Pestalozzi :

The mother must care for her child, feed it, protect it, amuse it. She cannot do otherwise; her strongest instincts impel her to this course.

And so she provides for its needs, and in every possible way makes up for its powerlessness. Thus the child is cared for and made happy, and the first seed of love is sown within him.

Presently the child's eyes fall on something he has never yet seen ; seized with wonder and fear, he utters a cry ; his mother presses him to her bosom, plays with him, diverts his attention, and his tears cease, though his eyes long remain wet. Should the unfamiliar object be seen again, the mother shelters the child in her arms, and smiles at him as before. This time, instead of crying, he answers his mother's smile by smiling himself, and the first seed of trust is sown.

His mother runs to his cradle at his least sign ; if he is hungry, she is there ; if thirsty, she satisfies him ; when he hears her step, he is content ; when he sees her, he stretches out his hand and fastens his eyes upon her bosom ; to him his mother and the satisfaction of his hunger are one and the same thing ; he is grateful.

These germs of love, trust, and gratitude soon develop. The child knows his mother's step ; he smiles at her shadow ; he loves whatever is like her ; a creature of the same appearance as his mother is, in his eyes, a good creature. Those whom his mother loves, he loves ; those whom she kisses, he kisses. This smile at the likeness of his mother is a smile at humanity, and the seed of brotherly love, the love of his fellow men, is sown.<sup>1</sup>

What I would like to emphasize in this account is that the awakening knowledge of the mother here described is from the first a knowledge vitally connected with love and trust which cannot for a

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Blow's *Letters to a Mother*, p. 18.



moment be conceived of as a mere intellectual acquaintance with facts. The next point to notice is that the child is learning himself at the same time and as part of the same process by which he is learning his mother. He also can make movements and sounds, and finds himself encouraged to do so. The tendency to imitate appears ; he can smile as well as she, and he does so. The effect of this is that he knows how it feels to smile, and to that extent knows his mother better, as well as himself. For imitation is not the mere copying of what the other has done ; it is the copying in order to master it, to make it a part of one's own acquirements, to understand what it means in the other and in the self. And from that earliest beginning the whole process of education consists in such imitative acquirement of habit, skill, and experience ; all of which as they are gained making us understand ourselves and our neighbours, each by means of the other.

Baldwin's description of this process is given in highly technical language, and I am not sure that it is possible to reproduce the substance of it with any diminution of the technicalities. I must refer those who wish to go into the matter more fully to his great book *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development*. He says :

One of the most interesting tendencies of the very young child in its responses to its environment is the tendency to recognize differences of personality. It responds to what have been called 'suggestions of personality.' As early as the second month it distinguishes its mother's or nurse's touch in the dark. . . . It is quite a

different thing from the child's behaviour towards things which are not persons. The sense of uncertainty grows stronger and stronger in its dealings with persons. A person stands for a group of experiences quite unstable in its prophetic, as it is in its historical, meaning.

Baldwin puts this first, before any experience of the child's own body. He calls it the projective stage of personal consciousness as distinguished from the subjective stage when the experiences of its own body is added. Concerning this he says :

The instrument of transition from such a projective to a subjective sense of personality is the child's active bodily self, and the method of it is *the function of imitation* ; when the organism is ripe for the enlargement of its active range by new accommodations, then he . . . starts on his career of imitation. And, of course, he imitates persons.

Further, persons are bodies which move. And among these bodies which move . . . a very peculiar and interesting one is his own body. It has connected with it certain intimate features which all others lack—strains, stresses, resistances, pains, &c., an inner, felt series added to the new imitative series. But it is only when a peculiar experience arises which we call effort that there comes that great line of cleavage in his experience which indicates the rise of volition, and which separates off the series now first really *subjective*. . . . It is easy to see what now happens. The child's subject sense goes out by a sort of return dialectic to illuminate the other persons. . . . The subjective becomes *ejective* ; that is, other

people's bodies, says the child to himself, have experiences *in them* such as mine has. . . . This is the third stage; the ejective or social self is born. . . .

The 'ego' and the 'alter' are thus born together. Both are crude and unreflective, largely organic. And the two get purified and clarified together by this twofold reaction between project and subject, and subject and eject. My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself. But 'ego' and 'alter' are thus essentially social; each is a 'socius,' and each is an imitative creation.<sup>1</sup>

Baldwin teaches that 'what the person thinks as himself is a pole or terminus at one end of an opposition in the sense of personality generally, and that the other pole or terminus is the thought he has of the other person, the "alter."'

That is, it must be confessed, a formidable-looking proposition; but if we will have a little patience with it, its meaning and truth may both grow clearer.

I think of myself, for instance, as a person who has definite family relationships, as a son, a brother, a husband, a father. Now I cannot think of myself as a son without thinking of my parents, or as a father without thinking of my children. The thought of myself as a son is a thought with two poles, to use Baldwin's illustration; I am at one pole of this thought and my parents at the other. I cannot think of myself in any personal relationship without

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

thinking, not only at the same time but as part of the same thought, of those between whom and myself this relationship exists. But this is not what Baldwin is immediately dealing with. I have put it down because I think it helps me to get to his point.

I think of myself as having certain personal acquirements, as, for example, being able to talk English. There was a time when I could not so think of myself, for I could not talk. But other people could, and I partly understood them. I thought of them as people who could talk, and when, by imitating them, I learned to talk, the attribute 'person who can talk' was shifted from the other end of the pole (that is, my thought of others) to my end. But immediately it shifted back again with added meaning. For I knew now what it felt like to talk, and I attributed to the others feelings like the new one I was now able to experience as my own. Now all our personal acquirements have thus been found by us first in others with whom we were in contact. Observing these acquirements in them, we made them our own by imitation. Immediately, we found that not only was our own personality enriched by the experience of the new acquirement, but we knew the others better through the same experience.

Now let us take an example from the religious life. Suppose I have never prayed, but I know some one who prays to God. I know that he prays, and also that there is a certain satisfaction that he has in doing so. I am induced to pray myself. I do so, and thereupon I know how it feels to pray. I know the sense of peace and confidence that arises from

having done so. I have tasted that wonderful sense that there is One who has heard me. My own personality is enriched by this new experience, and, by the same experience, my knowledge of my praying neighbour is enlarged too. I know now, from inside, from my knowledge of myself, what a praying man is. I have learned him in learning myself, just as I have learned myself as a praying man by imitating him.

The thought of self has two ends to it; I am at one end and my neighbour is at the other. My personal acquirements carry with them a sense of self-approbation. I am pleased that I am a person able to do such and such things. But the Other can do these things, and the same self-thought obliges me to admire him for it. Or I think of myself that I deserve such and such things; and immediately the self-thought carries me to the other pole. My comrade, too, if he is such as I, he also deserves the same things. Justice and sympathy appear as part of the same self-thought. There are things which I want in life; if the others are like me, they have a right to want the same things. If I insist on the gratification of my wants at their expense, a certain violence is done to my thought, it is dislocated, and I know what 'ought not' means. I am miserable and out of harmony with my larger self. Morality and (when the law of righteousness is defied) sin appear, and they are most intimately intertwined with the thought of self.

There are certain things I want from God. Daily bread to begin with. But the Others are hungry as well as I, and they will want God to give them daily bread too. If I may expect such a boon from



His hands, and they are like me, they also may expect the same good gift. If I 'take the bread out of their mouth,' my own conscience of right is hurt, my sense of fellowship with them is badly damaged, and I am sure God will be angry with me, for I am sure I should be angry with any one in the same position.

The thought of ourself and of the others is one, and it is the same kind of thought by which we know God. Bound up with it from the first is the sense of justice and sympathy, of duty and claim, which distinguishes it so deeply from our thought about things.

At a certain stage of life a little child has not yet learned the use of the first personal pronoun. He calls himself by the name by which other people call him, and obviously has not yet felt the need of that differentiation that makes each of the rest of us say 'I' and 'me.' It is said there are tribes whose language bears evidence of a time when nobody said 'I.' Our Old Testament stories have shown us a rather later stage when the distinguishing of the individual was by no means completely done. But with most of us it has been very fully accomplished, and we have more than once set our personal will and choice on a plane of absolute distinctness from that of others. We feel fully and deeply the importance and value of the spiritual freedom that must at all costs be self-determined in its thought and in its choice. Our difficulty is to realize that the bond which unites us to society is deeper and more fundamental than the individuality which separates us, and leaves us alone and free. But

surely it must be so, because the highest value of our independence and freedom is that it enables us to choose union with our People and our God, and to give ourselves to them in a far worthier manner than would be possible if we lacked the self-determination which is the ground of our power to give and to love.

The points I want to emphasize are that we do, as a matter of fact, from our childhood up, learn to know ourselves and others as *one* knowledge, and that this kind of knowledge which we have of ourselves and our neighbours is the same kind of knowledge as that we are capable of having concerning God. On the other hand, it is distinct in character from the kind of knowledge we have of the external world. That knowledge is cold, untouched by our emotions, and making no appeal to our will ; while this is vitally connected both with our feelings and our choice. It depends largely upon our character, it brings with it a strong sense of rights and duties, it uses to the full the best intellectual powers we possess ; but it never shows any tendency to take the scientific form that belongs to our knowledge of nature. Its values are not numerical but moral.

I want also to maintain that when these facts are fairly considered it will be seen to be a legitimate inference from them that the world of persons which we know in this unique fashion, the world which belongs to us, to which we belong, is ours in an entirely different sense from that in which we claim property in things. The community of persons forms a whole, and this whole ultimately includes all the beings possessed of personality in every

part of the universe of God. Our own individual life comes to its true blossoming and fruitage, not in its separate unity, but as a part of this great company, membership of which is absolutely essential to the growth, and finally to the existence, of our own personality.

## CHAPTER VIII

The knowledge of God demanded by the prophets—Hidden from the wise and prudent—The natural man—Has he no faculties for understanding it?—The ox and the ass know—Is it the same as the knowledge a man has of his friend?

THE problem I am raising concerning our two kinds of knowledge is one of which I have not been able to find anywhere any full or complete treatment. It matters so much to my thought, however, that I am compelled to set it down as well as I can myself, in the hope that my doing so may at least start somebody more competent and better equipped at the task of making this important distinction clear. And I must beg my readers not to be impatient with me if, in order to state my case, I go over things which everybody knows as a matter of course. Let me, then, call attention to the fact that our religion demands from its followers a kind of knowledge which it definitely separates from the common intellectual knowledge shared by mankind in general. The following passage from Harper's *Amos and Hosea* will serve to introduce what I want to say:

His (Hosea's) most bitter complaint against his people is that *they do not know Yahweh*. In brief, we are to take *know* as meaning not only

*knowledge, but also the practical application which knowledge calls for.* It is understanding, or comprehension, but more; for *to know God* is to feel the force of the deity and to act accordingly, i.e. to have the feeling (of love, or duty, or whatever else) which a knowledge of God implies. To *come to know God*, then, means to come into a new state of mind. Now (a) Hosea is not asking Israel to accept knowledge which the nation once possessed, but has lost; it is something really new in religion which he is holding out to them, although in xiii. 6 this ignorance is rhetorically styled *forgetfulness*; moreover, (b) he clearly indicates the obstacles in the way of their reaching up to this new knowledge, viz. their evil life and the failure of the religious leaders, priests, and prophets to do their duty; but (c) if these difficulties should be removed, how might Israel gain this true knowledge of Yahweh? Through the many deeds in which Yahweh had made manifestations of himself in history; through the prosperity and abundance with which she had been blessed; and, still further, through the laws or teachings which have already taken formal shape.<sup>1</sup>

I hardly think the writer of that passage would want to be accused of making too great a difference between the knowledge of Jehovah which Hosea demanded and ordinary human knowledge, and therefore he is the better witness as to how great the distinction is. A knowledge that is a 'new thing in religion,' and that makes the man who possesses it a new man, one who has 'come into a new state of mind,' is at any rate a phenomenon

<sup>1</sup> *International Critical Commentary*, p. cl. (Introduction).



worth studying. Let me quote from another commentator on the same prophet :

Here, then, we have a word for knowing, the utterance of which almost invariably starts a moral echo, whose very sound, as it were, is haunted by sympathy and by duty. It is knowledge, not as an effort of, so much as an effect upon the mind. It is not *to know* so as to see the fact of, but *to know* so as to feel the force of ; knowledge, not as acquisition and mastery, but as impression, passion. To quote Paul's distinction, it is not so much the apprehending as the being apprehended. It leads to a vivid result—either warm appreciation or change of mind or practical effort. It is sometimes the talent conceived as the trust, sometimes the enlistment of all the affections. It is knowledge that is followed by shame, or by love, or by reverence, or by the sense of a duty. One sees that it closely approaches the meaning of our 'conscience,' and understands how easily there was developed from it the evangelical name for repentance, *Metanoia*—that is, change of mind under a new impression of facts.<sup>1</sup>

I need not remind my readers of the Lord's word about things hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes, or of Paul's claim that the spiritual man judges all, but is himself judged of none, while the 'natural man' 'cannot' know the things of the spirit. It will, I think, be generally admitted that our religion speaks of a kind of knowledge, essential to its full enjoyment, which

<sup>1</sup> 'The Expositor's Bible' : *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, by A. Smith, Vol. I., p. 322.

differs deeply from the ordinary intellectual knowledge of mankind.

It has, I admit, been very generally thought that this 'heart-knowledge' was something with a purely religious value, very precious indeed to the man who possesses it; a pearl worth purchasing at any cost, but not a matter to be discussed with an outsider, because one must not cast one's pearls before swine. Besides, if the outsider does not possess it himself, he could not be expected to appreciate it in his neighbour. Very largely, therefore, it has been left to the joyful experience of the saints, to be shared in their fellowship with each other, without being much inquired into with regard to its place in human nature, or with regard to the value of the certainty which it brings. And yet that certainty is confessedly the only religious certainty that really satisfies people's hearts. The man who can say, 'I know Him whom I have believed,' and he alone, has really solved the great question of authority in religion. Is it not worth while trying to find out, at least as far as is possible, what is the nature of the knowledge which so deeply contents him?

And we need not too early raise the plea that the 'natural man' has no faculties for the task. At any rate he need not stop till he finds them fail. What if this second kind of knowledge is after all a function of every man's nature, whether he chooses to exercise it or not? Nay, more, what if it is already exercised in part by every human being who lives a social life at all, and the religious failure of it in the case of the 'natural man' is not a case of defect but of atrophy through disuse?

The prophets certainly did not speak of this knowledge as something only attainable by the few. Isaiah credits it, or something akin to it, even to the domestic animals when he says, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.'

For the knowledge in question is not merely the knowledge of God. It is the same kind of knowledge that a man may have, or fail to have, with regard to his friend. Any ordinary man may complain of his friend that he 'does not know him' in precisely the same way that Hosea complains that the people do not know Jehovah. Indeed, it is suggested to us that it was the tragedy of Hosea's own domestic life that led him to think of God as a Person cruelly misunderstood by His people. He had himself suffered all the heart-break of being the husband of a wife who 'did not know him' for the redeemer and saviour he desired to be to her. To know any of our fellows, so as to sympathize with them, to understand their point of view, to enter into their feelings, to love them and seek their love, requires just the same kind of knowledge that the prophet asks for on behalf of God. Between man and man, as well as in the religious life, it happens that the secrets of this kind of knowledge are hidden from the wise and prudent, and manifest to babes. In the higher intimacies of human friendship and love there are the open secrets that the outsider (the 'natural man' for the particular case) cannot understand, while the man who by love and sympathy knows the secret of his friend's mind and purpose passes judgement with a serene confidence of being

right that is quite beyond the challenge of the people who do not know.

Now I believe that this knowledge which a man has of his friend, this personal knowledge which gives all its value to our life in society, is on the one hand the *same in kind* as the knowledge which each of us has of himself, and on the other hand definitely *different in kind* from the intellectual knowledge which we all can possess of the world of things.

One of the reasons for my desire to make such a distinction is my conviction of the moral and spiritual value of it ; but that had better be left till we have considered other reasons in its favour.

## CHAPTER IX

Bergson's description of the knowledge of things—The 'nucleus' and the 'fringe'—His description of the 'fringe'—The matters with which the 'fringe' deals—The knowledge of self—Free will and personal responsibility—Men live as if these things were real—The real contact of will with will—The will of God—The knowledge of persons not intuitive but acquired—Yet not gained by means of inference—The fact of sympathy—The knowledge of persons as persons inexplicable by reference to intellectual methods of acquirement—Paulsen's paradox.

OUR intellectual knowledge of things is strikingly and fundamentally different from this knowledge of persons of which we have been speaking. For a description of it I extract a passage from the introduction to Bergson's *Creative Evolution* :

Our intellect, in the narrow sense of the word, is intended to secure the perfect fitting of our body to its environment, to represent the relation of external things among themselves—in short, to think matter. . . .

We shall see that the human intellect feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds its fulcrum and our industry its tools; that our concepts have been formed on the model of solids; that our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids; that, consequently, our intellect triumphs in geometry, wherein is revealed the kinship of logical thought with inorganized matter, and where the



intellect has only to follow its natural movement, after the lightest possible contact with experience, in order to go from discovery to discovery, sure that experience is following behind it, and will justify it invariably.<sup>1</sup>

From this very fitness of the intellect to deal with matter, and especially with solid matter, Bergson argues that 'our thought, in its purely logical form, is incapable of presenting the true nature of life.' The reason is that it is itself only an emanation of life, created by life, for the definite purpose of dealing, not with life itself, but with material things.

There is no need, however, for us to follow this argument, novel and striking as it is; but we do well to stop and note what he has said about what one might almost call the pre-established harmony between our intellectual powers and the material universe. Our knowledge of things always tends to become logical in form and scientific in method; and directly it does so it makes extremely rapid progress. The modern conquest of nature, since the scientific method has been frankly and generally adopted, has proceeded at a rate that the world never witnessed before, a rate that is giving the people of our own day a sense of breathless wonder as to what will come next. While, of course, there is, and is likely to be, plenty of empirical, rule-of-thumb knowledge of the world of things existing among us, it must be fairly obvious that the logical form and the scientific method are proving themselves to be supremely right for the purpose of

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. ix. (Introduction).

understanding and mastering the material world. Their final tendency seems to be to reduce all the knowledge they deal with to some kind or other of mathematical formulae, or relations of numbers. As Bergson says, this kind of knowledge is so sure that it dares unhesitatingly to go ahead of experience. It aims its telescope at the point in the sky where the calculated-on planet ought to be, and finds it there.

Now Bergson's whole effort in his book *Creative Evolution* is to get behind and beyond this scientific kind of knowledge. But he seems to allow very small place and force to the rest. He tells us that there remains

around our conceptual and logical thought a vague nebosity, made of the very substance out of which has been formed the luminous nucleus that we call the intellect. Therein reside certain powers that are complementary to the understanding, powers of which we have only an indistinct feeling when we remain shut up in ourselves, but which will become clear and distinct when they perceive themselves at work, so to speak, in the evolution of nature.<sup>1</sup>

In another place he says :

If the fringe exists, however delicate and indistinct, it should have more importance for philosophy than the bright nucleus it surrounds. For it is its presence that enables us to affirm that the nucleus is a nucleus, that pure intellect is a contraction, by condensation, of a more

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. xiii. (Introduction).

extensive power. And, just because this vague intuition is of no help in directing our action on things, which action takes place exclusively on the surface of reality, we may presume that it is to be exercised not merely on the surface, but below.<sup>1</sup>

Now if we are to understand that the 'nucleus' represents that part of our knowledge which is logical in form, which tends to become scientific, and finally to express its results in mathematical formulae, then it must surely be maintained that there is a very large amount of human knowledge and experience that belongs to the 'fringe.' Let us give up the material world of things frankly to the 'nucleus' intellect; but there remains the world of values, aesthetic, social, moral, and religious. Our thought about them cannot be coerced into the logical and mathematical forms, nor, it must be confessed, has it ever found out such a secret of rapid, unchecked, triumphal advance as science has given us with regard to the world of things. Indeed, in art and literature we are often more than doubtful as to the very existence of progress; whereas in science there is none so poor as to do reverence to the 'exploded' ideas of a decade or two ago. And yet there are but few who do not feel that these comparatively unprogressive things, art, literature, and religion, mean far more to us than the scientific knowledge that has won so many and such brilliant victories, and appears likely to go on to triumphs incalculably greater still.

When we look carefully at the knowledge which Bergson distinguishes as belonging to the 'fringe'

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 49.

rather than to the 'nucleus' of our consciousness, we shall find that there is very much more to say about it than his language would lead us to infer. As we have seen, it is the knowledge we have of history and of philosophy (as distinct from science), of poetry and of art, and, finally, of religion. And this knowledge, while it certainly will not take the definite logical and mathematical shape of our knowledge of material things, has a coherence and definiteness of its own.

There is, to begin with, our individual knowledge of ourselves as self-determined persons whose life is a unity, embracing Past, Present, and Future. This knowledge is not based upon logical reasoning, and a great part of it persists in the face of some very strong arguments against its reality. The questions of free-will and the existence of the soul may be cited as examples. So far as logical argument goes, there is probably quite as much to be said against the existence of moral freedom as in its favour; but men know that they possess it, and act on their knowledge even when they happen to be intellectually convinced by the determinist argument. The philosopher, who is most certain that it is an illusion, nevertheless lives his whole life as if it were true, and could not talk to his neighbours nor take his part in society on any other terms. Or take the question of the existence of the soul. Our leading psychologists seem to be mostly of opinion that the soul has no other unity than that made by the connected totality of our experiences; but the men who think so have as much conscience and responsibility for the past, and hope and fear for the future, as their fellows. It is

amazing to find how much can be reasonably said against the existence of any soul at all. But we do not trouble : for we know. And every value of our life is dominated by that knowledge, although assuredly its foundations are neither logical nor intellectual. We cannot live without believing both in our responsible personal unity and in our moral freedom.

The fact that the men who are intellectually convinced that the ideas of the existence of the soul and of free-will are not true still go on living as if they were true is a very illuminating one. To begin with, it is certain that they cannot help doing so because their position in society makes any other course impossible. They can only speak such language as other people speak, and that language is saturated through and through with these very ideas. It would be an absolutely impossible task to attempt to eradicate them. Language is not only the basis of our speech but of our thought. It seems to be possible in the realms of philosophic thought to escape from its compulsion, and to deny the thoughts about ourselves and our fellows which underlie our words and our grammar. But it cannot be done in the realms of conduct. We simply must treat our neighbours as if they were responsible and free, and we must behave as if we were. Not only does society compel this by its external influences, but also by means of the self-thought which we originally learned from it. Feelings of shame and self-reproach on the one hand, and of self-approbation on the other, cannot be eradicated by any effort of our will ; yet surely they have no meaning except in relation to that circle of ideas about the



soul and its personal responsibility and moral freedom whose truth is denied.

Now such facts make it plain that these ideas, whose validity is challenged, are at any rate very near to the ultimate reality of our nature. They are the only ones that will actually work in our common life. So far as I know, it is not seriously contended that they lead us astray so far as our social action is concerned. Under such circumstances I suppose that most men would claim that the wisest thing to do is, without for a moment refusing to investigate and to challenge them, to go on with our ordinary life on its accustomed basis ; acting, that is to say, as if they were true. But if we keep on acting as if these ideas were true, and our conduct practically justifies itself at every step, our conviction that they are true will inevitably be strengthened. Surely these are strong reasons for thinking that these beliefs have their source in some immediate contact with reality.

Is it possible to make any suggestion as to the nature of that reality ? One who is told that there is doubt as to the existence of the material universe stamps on the ground with his foot, and finds in the sense of resistance to his own bodily movement a contact with reality which satisfies him. It is not much use to argue against the reality of a stone wall to the man whose path it stops and who cannot get over it. Now the contact with reality which convinces us of the existence of a world of persons is that of Will with Will. When our determination comes up against our neighbour's, there arises a consciousness analogous to that we have when our body comes up against the stone wall. There is

resistance, and the resistance is of the same kind as the effort ; in the one case it is that of material substance, in the other of personal will. Now the most central mark of personality we know is will. It is so totally unlike anything material that it defies scientific definition. The materialist school of psychology fails very badly indeed in trying to deal with it. Yet there is nothing we understand better than will, while at the same time there is nothing we are less capable of defining. Is it not reasonable to conclude that our power of understanding (as we understand persons), and our power of defining (as we define things), are two powers differing in nature as they differ in use ; the one being fundamental to our knowledge of persons, and the other to our knowledge of things ?

It is fair to add here that the Christian testimony as to the reality of God is decisively on the personal side. Those who are convinced that they have found Him have come into contact with a Will greater and better than their own, and a ' Love that will not let them go.' They have learned to know Him by learning to adjust themselves to that Will and to respond to that Love. They have no material proofs to offer of His reality, any more than we have material proofs to offer of the existence of a human friend. We could give material proof of the existence of a living, breathing body, but none at all of that loving heart which is truly our friend. But there are many who would testify that with regard to the personal proof, which convinces them of the existence of a friend, God is more real to them than their nearest and dearest on earth : and the people who say this are entitled to a hearing.

This knowledge which we have of persons is not intuition, if by intuition is meant a kind of knowledge that springs up perfect in the mind without any need of growth or development through experience. The knowledge that we have of our own personality is not given all at once, but grows with our growth and changes and deepens with our experience. Moreover, in acquiring it we acquire knowledge of other selves as well as our own. We learn ourselves by learning them, and understand them by experiencing ourselves. Notwithstanding the fact that the special warmth and intimacy of feeling that our inside knowledge of our own body gives is lacking in the case of others, there is still much of the same sense of immediacy. When a psychologist tells us that what happens in the case of our making acquaintance with our friends is that we perceive only physical organisms capable of making certain sounds and movements, and that we *infer*, from the similarity of those sounds and movements to the ones we can make ourselves, that there is behind them a consciousness like our own, and a will that harmonizes or possibly clashes with ours, we cannot help feeling sure that there is some shorthand method of knowing people as people that does not need to use this roundabout journey at all. The babies who smile at their mothers have not yet brains developed enough to make any inferences.

The facts of sympathy, moreover, must not be left out of account, for they show that to a certain extent we feel immediately, and without any inference at all, what other people are feeling. If we enter a room where everybody is laughing, we shall want to

laugh too ; and that before we know what is the cause of the merriment. Many kinds of excitement communicate themselves directly from the one to the other in this way ; the case of panic fear being a most terrible example. This kind of sympathy does not depend on moral relationships. The guests of the old Roman noble who ordered his slave to be flung alive to the lampreys in his fishponds, as the penalty for breaking a costly vase, protested, not because they had any pity for the slave, but because his shrieks spoiled their dinner. They could not avoid feeling something of his agony, for they and the slave possessed a common life.

The question how I know another person who is talking to me to be a person like myself, with all that strange 'value' which we must needs attach to personality, has always been regarded as a difficult one. I suggest that it is more than difficult, it is actually insoluble, so long as we regard our acquaintanceship with persons as gained by the same kind of knowledge as that by which we learn the outside world of things. Our knowledge of things remains just as accurate, however far off the things may be removed from anything like sympathetic comprehension. Thus the astronomer can calculate the movements of the star none the less securely although the immensity of the spaces and numbers with which he is dealing is such that his mind refuses to attempt to conceive of them. Or the physicist can go on investigating the electric current, or the passage of light through the ether, although he has long ago ceased to attempt to realize to himself the wonders with which he is dealing. But our personal knowledge of men as



men, the knowledge which is the basis of all our social life, must always rest upon that very sympathetic understanding of which science gives up all hope at the beginning of its way. Paulsen puts this distinction in the form of a paradox :

*The better we conceive things, the less we understand them*, and conversely. We conceive the inorganic processes best—that is, we can define them so accurately as to make them calculable. The vital processes are not so easily reduced to conceptual mathematical formulae and calculation. Biology works with empirical laws altogether, the complete reduction of which to ultimate elementary laws of nature has so far proved to be impossible. Man is the most incalculable being in existence. Hence it is that his acts are still regarded as absolutely indeterminate, or as the effects of an indeterminate agent, the so-called free-will, which is simply equivalent to denying the possibility of conceiving or defining him. The reverse is true when it comes to understanding him. Human life is the only thing that we understand perfectly. We reach the maximum of understanding in history ; it is less complete in zoology and botany, and vanishes altogether in physics and astronomy, where we have the most perfect mathematical conception of things.<sup>1</sup>

I want to plead that this statement is not merely a paradox, but a statement of fact which marks out with clear broad lines the difference between the kind of knowledge which we have of persons and that which we have of things. The fair inference to draw from the fact that the ' most incalculable being

<sup>1</sup> Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 373.



in existence' is the 'only one that we understand perfectly' is that the field in which calculation is available and that in which understanding serves are totally different areas. We belong in some sense to both, and possess powers which put us into communication with both. But the calculable is something that we possess, and the comprehensible is something that we are. We *have* bodies of which we can form scientific conceptions; we *are* people who can understand one another. Paulsen himself, whose philosophy is monistic, comes down on the spiritual side with the following statement:

I know reality as it is in itself, in so far as I am real myself, or in so far as it is, or is like, that which I am, namely, spirit. This is the truth contained in the old saying of Greek philosophy: The like is known only by the like.<sup>1</sup>

But if we believe that matter is not spirit, and that both are real, and claim that we know reality so far as it is material through our perceptions and calculations, and so far as it is spiritual through our sympathetic understanding, we shall, I think, be on better standing-ground.

<sup>1</sup> Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 373.

## CHAPTER X

The sense of duty and claim an essential part of the knowledge of persons—The unnaturalness of ignoring people—Visitors from Mars—Huxley's proposal of two hospitals—The extent of the common corporate life—Loyalty—The two kinds of certainty.

At the heart of this knowledge of Self, and of the Other, lies a very wonderful sense of duty and claim. There is nothing like it in connexion with our intellectual knowledge of the world of things. When we think of ourselves we always, even when we most vigorously assert our own independence and freedom, think of ourselves *as persons having relations to other persons*. This sense of relationship cannot be wholly shaken off, even when there is a will to deny it. The 'others,' be they who they may, are something to us; there is something we have a right to expect from them, and something that we owe to them. The very first beginning of any acquaintance with a person, recognized as a person, shows at once the consciousness of duty and claim. With the child's earliest recognition of its mother arises the sense that it is *my* mother, who belongs to me and to whom I belong. Of course, this is not consciously and deliberately thought, but it is a part of the thought of 'mother' in its undifferentiated beginning, as well as in its developed completeness. Such a sense of relationship, modified, of course, in accordance with the

different positions we can hold with regard to each other, is part of our consciousness of every person who, even for a moment, crosses our path in life. Between us and them are claims and duties. We cannot think of them without thinking of their rights and our rights. We may upon occasion oppose, fight, even kill; but there is one thing we cannot do, or at least cannot believe ourselves right in doing, and that is to ignore. We could not live ourselves if we were ignored by our fellows; they had better imprison us, flog us, or even kill us than treat us as if we did not exist. As Professor James says in his *Psychology*:

No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met 'cut us dead,' and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruellest bodily tortures would be a relief; for these would make us feel that, however bad might be our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all.<sup>1</sup>

If the fancy of the novelist proved true, and beings from Mars invaded this planet, we should, of course, want to be sure that they were *persons*, with the capability both of intellectual knowledge and of moral affection; but as soon as this was clear

<sup>1</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I., p. 293.

we should feel at once that we owed them and that they owed us duties and rights. Professor Huxley is said to have made a proposal that, in order to test the value of prayer, two hospitals should be built, and that while the patients in both were treated with similar medical and nursing skill, those in one hospital should be prayed for and those in the other not. Thus data might be gained which would go to verify or else to disprove the idea of the power of prayer. Such a proposal must, even if in other things it were feasible, have utterly broken down over the impossibility of getting people deliberately to pray for the patients in one hospital and not in the other. No praying man could make such a distinction. We all know the terrible distinctions that can be made by bigotry and religious narrowness. But these, even the worst of them, have after all some sense of wholeness. The people left out are *reprobate*; they are not to be ignored, but to be punished. Now you can only punish a man if you first acknowledge him to be in some sense a member of your company. You had a right to expect something of him which he failed to do. If you had no rights and he no duties, why punish? But deliberately to leave people out of their share of the supposed mercies of God, merely in the interests of a scientific experiment, would, I believe, be outside the capabilities of the cruellest bigotry that ever oppressed mankind.

Now I suggest that this means that the whole company of persons in the universe of God are a unity, and that this consciousness of duty and claim which lies at the heart of all our knowledge of persons, including our own selves, should be

interpreted as a consciousness of that unity. We are 'members one of another.'

This matter deserves fuller statement and consideration. It is a very wonderful idea to arrive at, that the whole number of living, loving persons in the universe of God form a real unity and are indeed 'members one of another,' and that if there exist in other worlds other companies possessed of this same strange and wonderful value of personality, they also belong to us and we to them, if ever, under any circumstances, we come into any real contact with each other. But nothing less than this seems likely to satisfy the conception of the underlying unity of all persons in one common social life which is implied in that world-wide consciousness of duty and claim of which we have been speaking. It is only when the fact of the common corporate life is admitted that such ideas as those of rights and duties have any intelligible meaning.

One of the first results of the sense of relationship of which we have been speaking is the sentiment of loyalty or faithfulness to one's own group or company. Without it, the family, the tribe, and the state could never have been formed, nor continue to exist. It often seems to be a very limited feeling, and to stand in opposition to a larger and nobler solidarity than that to which it belongs ; but if it be examined carefully, it will be found that the vital thing in loyalty is never antagonism to those who are without, but fidelity to those who are within its bond. There is no need to destroy the smaller loyalties in order to create larger ones. The family can be loved all the better by the man who learns to love his tribe or nation, and you will never make him



a better patriot by making him a worse father. The lesser loyalties of citizenship [or tribe can co-exist with the larger one to the great State or Empire. The little circles of primitive loyalty are microcosms. The whole universe of Society is there in miniature, just as the whole fellowship of the Catholic Church of Christ is 'where two or three are gathered together' in the Name. Similarly the great fellowship of mankind is manifested in the loving family circle. All that is wanted is to bring in the Others, so that there is one family and all men are brethren. Patriotism, again, is not really strengthened by hatred to foreigners; one will love one's country all the better for realizing that the other nations are not aliens but fellow citizens, and the truest loyalty will always be glad to find reasons for bringing the Others inside its covenant, and will be pained by being forced into antagonism to the true and loyal souls whom it discovers in other camps than its own. Thus, this great sentiment, so valuable for all the purposes of human social life, bears its witness also to the solidarity of the whole universe of thinking, living persons.

Finally, these two kinds of knowledge lead to two totally different kinds of certainty. Let us examine the contrast between the certainty which a man has of the love and loyalty of his friend, or the faithfulness of his God, and the certainty which he has of such a fact as that the squares of the two sides of a right-angled triangle are together equal to the square of the hypotenuse. And to begin with let us consider that point in which the advantage seems decidedly to be with the mathematical certainty. We know, by sorrowful experience, that a man's

friend may fail him ; we are sure that geometry never will do so. This brings us up against the terrible fact of sin, which has no existence in the material world, but is pervasively present in the personal one. It is a fact which forces Christian thinkers at some point to part company with all the philosophers who ignore it. We simply cannot believe that it is possible to give any satisfactory account of personality and society, and leave it out. It is there, unreason spoiling our logic, disorder marring the cosmos, the thing which ought not to be, affronting the Eternal Righteousness and Love. The only thing to do is to rejoice in God's warfare against it, and help Him with all our faith and loyalty.

Taking note of the fact that the appearance of sin reveals the existence of an unspeakable difference between the sphere in which it is present and that in which it is not, we pass on to a second difference between our two certainties, that of value. To miss the knowledge of the love of a friend is to impoverish life ; to miss the knowledge of an important mathematical fact is a vastly less important matter. We are, most of us, quite content that somebody else should know for us enough science to run the world's shipping, telegraphy, and such-like things ; but it would not for a moment satisfy us that anybody should know for us the love that makes life worth living. To most people the intellectual fact is valuable just for its results ; and while it may be readily and fully admitted that there are those to whom it has value in itself, as additional insight into the universe, yet this value never rises to any height comparable to that of the personal certainty.

Nobody blames poor Galileo much because, to save his life, he 'recanted' the truth he had discovered about the motion of the earth; but not only the Christian martyrs, but many an unnoticed man and woman besides, has laid down his life for his friend.

Moreover, such people feel that love and loyalty compel them to do so. That marks another difference between the two certainties. The one involves a personal duty and claim, while it is only in a very far-off sense that the other can be said to do so. And even in those cases where it might be said that the knowledge of some scientific fact involved duty and responsibility, that is only because of the interaction between the worlds of persons and things. Such duty and responsibility would assuredly be to *persons*; for nobody has any sense of duty and responsibility to the material world apart from the people who live on it and the God who made it.

But the great words which find the sphere of their meaning in personal certainties about persons, faith, hope, love, and loyalty, are in themselves sufficient witness to the wideness of the gulf which separates those certainties from the others in regard to which such words have no meaning at all.

The certainties in which our two kinds of knowledge result are, therefore, witnesses to the essential differences between those kinds of knowledge themselves.

## CHAPTER XI

The knowledge of things has made most progress—Has real progress been made in the knowledge of persons?—Family life—The State—Literature, Art, and Philosophy—Religious experience—Has progress been hindered?—Do people really desire spiritual progress?—Sin a social fact as well as a religious one.

IN making the comparison between our knowledge of persons and our knowledge of things, we have had to admit that the knowledge of things has made progress at an incomparably greater rate than the knowledge of persons. The effect of the irresistible march of scientific progress is such as to create a doubt as to whether there is any real progress at all connected with the other knowledge. In literature and art we go back to the great masters, and do not expect to see them surpassed. Moreover, man has always been inclined to turn back for the supreme examples of wisdom, and to expect it rather in the treasures of the past than in the present, busy, work-a-day world. But a little reflection will show us that although the progress does not appear to be by any means so constant and regular, yet real progress has been made and may be confidently expected. What we need to do is, if we can, to find out something of its laws. There was very little progress in the knowledge of the external world until the human mind was set at liberty by a better understanding of its own methods ; indeed, a good many arts and sciences seem to have been known to the

ancients and forgotten again because there was no method of progress which carried them with it in an irresistible march forward like that of modern science.

Let us, however, take two or three test cases, and let the first be that of family life. It is, of course, not possible for me to deal with the question of the earlier forms taken by the family group ; but if one may take the Bible as a record of the past, and the history of civilization in the Roman Empire in Europe, and in our own land, there is surely reason to think that the Christian family of to-day is a sweeter, holier, and more successful organization than any the world has previously seen ; and that the love between husband and wife, between parents and children, has a more worthy expression than at any other time in the world's history. Our Bible, for instance, does not anywhere afford us a picture of a happy family life such as we could find for ourselves, without having to search long, in the Christian Church of to-day. Students of the Middle Ages tell us that it is possible to date the beginnings of that 'romantic love' that has done so much to ennoble and purify the relations of men and women. In our own generation we have seen the abandonment of the old sternness of discipline that held children apart from their parents so as to leave a very painful mark upon the memories of many who are still living.

We shall get an example more easy to discuss if we next consider the life of the State. It is a little thing to say that the Bible records do not give us any picture of civic and national life which we can recognize as a satisfactory one. That great prophet



who, in a sketch of the Messianic age, promised that the officers should be peace and the exactors righteousness<sup>1</sup> cannot have had any personal experience of a state in which the tax-collectors did not cheat, and the police did faithfully maintain justice, or he would not have named such things as blessings only to be hoped for in the supreme day of the Kingdom. Surely we may claim that with all the failings of our modern civilization we have learned how to live together in peace and mutual helpfulness very much more successfully than any peoples of whose past we have historic records. The personal liberty, the public order, and the freedom from the grosser forms of oppression of our modern life are very great acquisitions, and the struggles and sufferings that lie behind them assuredly have not been in vain.

Even with regard to literature and art it must be remembered that our classical standards are none of them very ancient. The Greek art and literature must surely have been an immeasurable advance upon anything that had gone before it; and the world's poetry, while we can mark no definite lines of progress with regard to it, has certainly had times of supreme gain. And after these times things have never dropped back quite to the position in which they were before.

Philosophy, too, whilst still looking back to Plato and Aristotle, has had its times of real progress and development; and assuredly here also,

Thro' the ages an increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the  
suns.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lx. 17.

In many ways religion is the best of all the examples that can be afforded of the reality of progress in this highest kind of knowledge, here including the knowledge of God as well as of each other. The deeply impressive story of Abraham taking his son with him to offer him for a sacrifice will serve to illustrate this point. In all ages the world has learned from that story a lesson of supreme trust in God and willingness to surrender all at His bidding. But if anybody should imagine to-day that he had had a divine call to offer his son in sacrifice, we should examine into the state of his mind, and probably put him into a lunatic asylum. Nobody would ever dream of thinking that it might be true, for we should say without hesitation that we know God better—and so we do.

The history of the Chosen People, while containing many a deep depression, has certainly, also, a magnificent upward curve. And the Christian Church, with many sorrowful failures and turnings out of the road, has still assuredly been led forward by the Spirit of God. We can see so plainly the defects and failures of our own day, and feel them so keenly, just because we recognize that we have the right to expect better things.

I think such considerations as these, while they lead us to feel that progress has been a reality, will compel us also to hold that at most times it must have been very badly hindered indeed. Will it not be wise of us to try to find out if there is not some way of bringing to bear all the gains of the past, so that they may have a cumulative effect; and the people of God, in their corporate life, may 'mount

up with wings as eagles ; run, and not be weary ; walk, and not faint ' ?<sup>1</sup>

One striking question immediately raises itself, when we turn our attention in this direction ; the question, namely, whether people really desire spiritual progress as they desire progress in the knowledge of things. The impoverished nature of our corporate life, its few means of self-expression, its terrible limitations, and the lack of balance between its parts, are no doubt all of them contributory causes to the spasmodic and uncertain nature of our progress. But behind all these is the question whether men really are in earnest in desiring it. It is obvious that the noblest fellowship exacts a heavy toll in the shape of personal sacrifice, and it may be that one reason why the affairs of the Kingdom do not prosper as they should is just simply that people are not willing to pay the price.

The plain truth is that the great hindrance has always been Sin. Sin is not merely a word of religion. No complete social thinking is possible that does not take account of it. None of the differences between the world of persons and that of things of which we have spoken is so deep as that which arises from the fact of sin. This unreasonable thing, the thing that contradicts logic, the thing that is out of harmony with the cosmic order, never exists at all in the world of external nature. Everybody is certain beforehand that new facts, however discovered, will always prove to be in harmony with, and indeed to form a part of, that ordered totality which we recognize as the natural universe. A fact for which there is no reason is unthinkable

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 31.

there. But directly we come to the world of persons we are confronted with this shocking anomaly. It is not a theory that has been created in the interests of religion that such a thing exists as sin. The whole form of human language is based on the assumption that it has to be dealt with. The whole history of human society is seamed and scarred with the marks of the mischief it has done. The thing that exists and that yet ought not to be is the eternal problem of our ethical thought. The life of Society and the life of the Individual are both of them lived in the presence of a constant peril. Both suffer incalculable losses, and are threatened with absolute ruin from the same enemy. And no consideration of our relations to each other is likely to be serviceable which ignores this tremendous fact. The statement of religion that we are a fallen race, living in a damaged world, under the sway of an offended God, has behind it facts of the gravest import, which must be taken account of if we would understand the position of the human race in the world at all.

And, of course, the 'good news' of redemption is also a social fact as well as a religious one.

## CHAPTER XII

It is only in the social life that personality finds its full meaning and value—Language—Society and the material basis of life—The so-called selfish pleasures—We are 'ends in ourselves'—Eucken's statement and warning—The need of God both for the Individual and Society—The true use of individual freedom—The many existing kinds of Society and the true Society—Toleration—The value of individual freedom—The right of privacy—Society and the external world—Our bodies—The animals—The need our thought has of God.

WE have claimed that the social life is absolutely essential to the growth and even to the existence of our personality, and only in it can that personality find its full meaning and value. The unity and individuality of each separate person is indeed one end of a truth, the other end of which is his vital relationship to society and to God. We have learned all our knowledge, and all our skill, and all our comprehension of ourselves through our fellowship with society. Thus, language is an essentially social possession; it would be of no use to us if it were not at the same time the property of those with whom we live. We obtained it from society; by its means we have acquired not only all our information, but our very ability to think; and have also been able to enter into the deeper fellowship that unites us in feeling, affection, and will with those who, like ourselves, belong to the great social unity.



The enormous range and complexity of our relationship to society with regard to the material basis of life is so familiar to us that we, as is often the case with extremely familiar matters, pass it by without notice. But when we sit down to our breakfast the tablecloth represents the work of men growing cotton, transporting it on railways and in steamships, spinning and weaving it, and, in order to do these things, using machinery that has itself involved the labour of other countless multitudes. Similar things could be said of knife and fork and plate, of tea and sugar and bread. It must, indeed, be literally true that we never partake of a meal without entering into the labour of millions of our fellow men. Aristotle discusses the question of how many citizens are necessary to the existence of a state in which the noble life of a full humanity can be lived. We might ask how many people there need to be in the world in order for us to be able to live in it in what we call 'reasonable comfort.' And if there is this need for a world of men in order to provide us with a satisfactory material basis of life, is not the need likely to be as extensive to provide us with opportunity for the full exercise of our higher spiritual faculties?

Even in those aspects of our nature which seem most specially selfish we can only live the fullest life by the help of society. If there is a personal gratification which seems purely selfish, it is such a one as that of eating and drinking, and yet people do not seem able to get the fullest enjoyment out of the gratification of their palate except the enjoyment is shared and reflected back to them through the like experience of their companions. The

selfish man who has a few bottles of some rare and costly wine, while he certainly will not give it away willingly, yet needs somebody to drink it with him and help him appreciate it. It appears necessary to his own full enjoyment of it that he should see in some other than himself that delight in all the distinctive qualities of his wine which only a trained taste can give. So he gives away—not to his best friend, but to the best connoisseur he knows—a glass of his treasured wine, grudging as he pours it out, not for any really unselfish reason, but to heighten his own pleasure in the glass he is about to drink himself. It will be found that this example is neither an exaggerated nor an uncommon one, but that in the whole range of our life, in what we call its most private experiences, on its animal side as well as its spiritual, we cannot come to the full possession of ourselves except in union with our fellows.

Society moulded us, trained us, and made us what we are before we developed at all that sense of individual freedom by means of which we have been able to stand alone. But that amazing dignity of self-determined life has come to us, and actually places us in a position of independent liberty not only over against society, but also over against God. We are 'ends in ourselves.' Society cannot compel us to conform to it, nor can God Himself make us love Him. The old bonds of family custom, state law, social conformity, religious training, are like the green withes that bound Samson. Theology has been compelled to re-write its doctrine of the sovereignty of God to make room for the will of man. And Philosophy is sorely put to it to find

place for an energy that cannot be smoothed into order with the rest of the universe, but insists on being regarded as itself a being and a cause.

Eucken says :

The emancipation of the individual is in all probability the most prominent feature of the whole of modern life. The individual sought and won in this emancipation not only a direct relationship to God and the whole, but an independent position with regard to the social whole.<sup>1</sup>

A little farther on he adds :

The individual did not aspire to independence in order to remain in opposition to the world and to his social environment, and to wrap himself up in a consciousness of proud superiority; he returned joyfully to society, extended his sphere of life further and further, finally growing, in harmony with all environment, to a world-embracing personality.<sup>2</sup>

Eucken goes on to raise a problem of the very highest importance. He points out that in the immediate present many tendencies are working to depress the idea of the predominance of the individual, such as the call of scientific progress to conquer the material world, the aspiration for a worthier social order, the economic success of huge businesses, the power of the press and of public opinion, and finally the science of sociology with its

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Main Currents of Modern Thought*, p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

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averages and its proof of the all-pervading influence of the social environment. And he sees a danger of loss to the spiritual life from this very socialization of it.

Morality becomes altruism, a working for the good of society; art finds no higher task than the sympathetic and accurate representation of social conditions; education endeavours rather to elevate the general level of culture than to develop anything individual.<sup>1</sup>

He warns us that

Society, through thus reducing the individual, must itself suffer an unavoidable reduction. Do we not perceive clearly enough how in the midst of all the imposing triumphs of technical science clearly marked personalities are becoming scarcer and scarcer, while at the same time the level of our common life is sinking? Work, the essence of the modern construction of life, was to have strengthened the soul. We are now realizing that the gigantic modern developments of work weaken, nay, crush, man's soul.<sup>2</sup>

He indicates the source of the mischief when he tells us that the present tendency is to

treat the spiritual content of life as a *means* towards human welfare. . . . In spite of all outward development, this path will never lead to any inward elevation of man. In this direction is no original creation, no direct relationship to the

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Main Currents*, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

whole, no inner independence. Such a life cannot contribute anything essentially new, nor indicate high goals to uplift human existence. It binds man down to his own natural condition, and makes him a slave to himself.<sup>1</sup>

Eucken's conclusion is 'a strong scepticism in respect to the well-known doctrine of the summation of reason in the community,'<sup>2</sup> and a strong defence of the independence of the individual. 'There has been,' he says, 'no essential progress on the part of human culture and civilization without a division of humanity; a higher must first be produced in order to attract the rest; a column of fire must go before the host to show it the way through the wilderness.'<sup>3</sup> The spiritually-directed individual appears as the representative not of merely human culture, but of spiritual culture, or of an inner infinity as compared with all outward limitation. He needs a spiritual world behind him and capacity to draw upon its strength.

The whole discussion, which I have tried to epitomize, is most valuable. If by society is meant simply human society, Eucken's protest and warning are of the greatest weight. From our Christian point of view the danger is avoided only so long as we strenuously maintain first the direct access of the individual to God, and then, with it, the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Christian community. We cannot explain society or personality and leave God out, nor can personality and society come to any true relationship with each other except in

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Main Currents*, p. 353.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.



Him. But His presence delivers us from the very real danger of the purely human social ideals whose poverty Eucken exposes.

Having such a fellowship with God, and such a Spirit-filled community for which to live, the best use to which we can put this priceless possession of personal independence is to make a deliberate choice, to which we will steadfastly hold for the rest of our days, that we *will* be true and faithful members of the community. It is a calamitous mistake for people to think that they are protecting their personal freedom by permanently holding themselves so loose to social order that they may at any moment choose to repudiate it. The attempt to do this creates a weak and irresponsible character which earns the well-deserved contempt of all right-thinking men. The man who imagines, for example, that he preserves his freedom with regard to human love by holding himself ready at any moment to forsake one woman and choose another deserves all the scorn that is poured upon him. His true freedom in the matter obviously consists in the power which he possesses of a steadfast will to abide loyally for the whole of his life by the choice which he has once deliberately made. Such an example shows us that our freedom is the means by which we can link ourselves to the society of which we are a living part more firmly than would be possible if no such freedom existed. The pledged loyalty of good men creates a bond far stronger than any ties of race or nature can possibly do. That is why we have insisted upon it that the social life is prior to the individual.

The young man or woman who stands ' free ' at the

gateway of life to choose and to give, has received that freedom to begin with from society, and especially from the parents in whose loving care and in whose sheltered home the free individual could alone come to maturity. The supreme good of their possession is that they are able to give themselves back to society, and not that they have a right to hold themselves aloof from it. An unfree man could not truly love either his neighbour or his God, but the free man finds his truest liberty in giving himself to both. The voluntarily chosen common life is the noblest and most perfect experience possible to man.

We are confronted here, however, by the problem of the existence of many kinds of society among which we are able to make a selection, and of the fact that the choice we make among them decides the course of growth of our own character.

The response which we make to different kinds of society is strikingly different. Attention has often been called to the case of a little boy who is a bully to his younger brothers or sisters, a meek and submissive slave to boys who are bigger than himself, who has still another pattern of behaviour for his mother, and again a different one for his father, and yet another for his school teacher. And this changeableness in adaptation to different company, although it is particularly open and unashamed in the case of a small boy, is just as real with the rest of us. We talk differently, we have a different set of opinions and interests for each different company in which we move. And more important still, all of these different companies, and our attitude in them, are playing their part in shaping our

character. The individual comes to harmonize more and more with the society he chooses, or that in which he is compelled to move ; and it is not very long before he has grown so set and fixed with regard to it that he cannot adapt himself to new circles and new outlooks. From one point of view the business of education is simply to teach us to adapt ourselves to that kind of company in which it is desired that we shall move ; and the whole personality takes its tone from the kinds of social life which we live. Sometimes very painful inconsistencies of character appear where people have been trying to adapt themselves at the same time to fellowships which are quite out of harmony with each other. We say the man is living a double life, and he becomes false and hypocritical in the vain endeavour to maintain two inharmonious selves. The importance of actually living in that fellowship to which we desire that our own nature shall conform is obvious. Unless we give time and opportunity for the Christian society to mould our character, to influence our thoughts, to decide our attitude, and to train our vision, we shall find ourselves incapable of the very life we desire to live. To choose it means to give time to it, to take trouble about it, to live in the company of those who live it, to give ourselves up willingly to all its powerful determining influences in order that they may mould us to full harmony with it.

It is not always clearly recognized what this means with regard to our relation to all other societies whose principles and purposes are definitely inconsistent with the Christian one. Toleration always means some sort of recognition that our own society

is only a partial one ; that there is room for a good many other kinds of society which are superficially inconsistent with it ; and therefore that there is a higher unity in which these superficial differences are surmounted so that the social orders we tolerate, but do not join, along with our own, are all parts of it, and as parts of this highest order are not finally inconsistent with each other. But directly another society is recognized as the deadly foe of that to which we belong, toleration is impossible. The modern State, for instance, tolerates all manner of odd and perverse combinations of its citizens, but makes war unhesitatingly and without pity upon an organization of thieves, or one for the procuring of young girls for the White Slave traffic.

Now the Christian cannot admit that the People of God is in any final sense a partial society, or that other groupings of people with antagonistic purposes, or even purposes to ignore this great Fellowship, can co-exist or come into any kind of higher harmony with it. In the Middle Ages the attitude of at least a part of Christianity towards the societies judged to be definitely antagonistic was precisely that of the modern state towards the White Slave traffic. There was, however, a terrible mistake here. The business of the Christian is to win all men for the company of Christ ; and they can only be won as free men. He is bound, therefore, to respect human freedom to the utmost limits, because to fail to do so is to give up all hope of winning the man on whom we attempt compulsion. The Christian must give up all the weapons of force frankly ; but he remains, for all that, if he be true to his



Company, an aggressive person who is not, and ought not to be, content that any one should remain outside of it.

I have discussed this question of 'intolerance' here because it seems to me that the same things as those I have said about the Christian fellowship would be true of any form of human society which was conscious of itself as a complete and ultimate one. The general notion that is behind our principles of tolerance surely is that 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be,' and therefore we are anxious not to suppress any forms of society that might conceivably some day have a contribution to make to the common good. It is not inconsistent with a conviction that ultimately society is one, and all who are possessed of personality form a part of it; but it does amount to a confession that we cannot see the vision of the whole with sufficient clearness to be competent to condemn to destruction any grouping of people except those which patently and vitally attack the rights of personality on which all our hopes of progress depend. To me it does not seem a lack of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for His people to admit on their part such a dimness in their vision of the whole as to make them share this tolerance to the full, provided always that they do not make the mistake of allowing it to pass into cold indifference. If they do not care for their fellows, and for all of them, they have missed the very mind of their Master.

The point of this digression, so far as it concerns our central theme, is that society, in spite of its many diversities and antagonisms, must be conceived of as finally tending to become a unity whose



boundaries are not smaller than those of personality itself.

As we saw in our historical sketch, so we must find here the importance of jealously maintaining the right of the individual to his personal freedom. He is not to give himself to Society so as to become its slave. He is to serve it with the service of perfect freedom, for the best gifts to it can only be given so long as he is free to live his own life and to choose for himself what his contribution shall be. As in the case of the prophets of Israel, there are times when society is best served by opposing it and rebuking it. It is only through the vision of the free individual that society can ever see its own true way forward. The new ideas and inventions always come from the unit; the ratification and acceptance of them is the business of the social whole. The individual freedom is the more important because society does not appear to possess the power to create its own true leaders; it can only recognize them when they make themselves known. The men who lead the world's thinking are not the result of the culture of the schools. We never know where we shall find the next one till he appears and utters his thought, and then we know that we must absorb that thought and make it a part of the common inheritance. The great political leaders are not made such by popular election; they are elected because they are there, and society recognizes them as capable of its government. Everything, therefore, which makes it possible for men to live and think, and be at the highest levels of personal life, is of as great value to Society as it is to themselves. This precious treasure of personal freedom carries

with it some other rights whose importance is apt to be overlooked.

There is, for instance, a right to privacy; the right not to have the sanctuaries of the body or mind ruthlessly invaded and violated. In civil life and in social life the protection of these rights has been gained slowly, and is still far from being as complete as it should be. It is society itself that loses if it damages, even to the slightest extent, the personal dignity of the individual. The more his special value can be preserved, the more is Society enriched by his joining it.

When we turn to the relation between human society and the external world, we see more reason for recognizing the unity of Society, and the gulf that separates it from the world of things. There is, however, a point at which the two come into closest possible contact—our own bodies are part of the material world, and yet at the same time part of ourselves. In one way they bring us into closer contact with things than with persons. We can *see* things, but the soul or personality is invisible. We can *hear* the sound of words, but the love they carry is not conveyed to us by our outward senses. The contact of our bodies with the world of nature is the basis of that logical and scientific knowledge of things to which we have often referred. Just exactly what the contact of heart with heart really means we can never say. But it is persons who have our love or hate, who are of supreme interest to us; at the bottom of the knowledge we possess of them is the conviction that in some deep sense they are a part of ourselves. On the other hand, although

we allow that our bodies belong to the material world (and our bodies are surely a part of ourselves), we find ourselves not only unwilling to admit that we, as persons, are a part of that world, but convinced that there is an incalculable difference of value between ourselves and it. Men own the world, and have not the slightest hesitation or scruple in using it to serve their own purposes, without any doubt that they are entitled to do so. All their duties with regard to the world are, in the last analysis, duties to their neighbour or their God. Nobody feels the slightest scruple about using things in any way in which he desires to use them, except it be in relation to these two. Apart from Society and God, man has no duties to the world ; it is something to stand on, something to make a shelter out of, something from which to obtain food, something in which to interest and please himself in a thousand ways ; and it is God's world and man's world, but it has no rights of its own at all.

One real difficulty for our thought arises here—the question of the animal creation. To them we have duties, and we are prepared to admit that they have rights ; although we cannot allow that they have a right to their own life if the purposes of mankind are best served by their death. It is obvious that we could not continue to live in the world and acknowledge for the animals such a right to life as we claim for ourselves. The question of their personality arises, and presents great difficulties. Some of them have many personal traits and high ones, and many affectionate people have earnestly hoped that it was true that they possessed such personality as to make it possible to believe in their having

another life after death. There is no need to discuss these interesting problems here, except that we ought to take note of the fact that here is a case where we are not quite certain and agreed as to where the boundary lies between persons and things. Indeed, there seems some reason for going farther than the animals, till we get to the great boundary that divides the living from the non-living. At present it is rather matter of feeling and faith than of decisive evidence that leads us to draw the boundaries of personality so as to leave the animals outside. And when a question arises like that of vivisection, some of us find it extremely difficult to accept the consequences of our judgement that they are outside. There is certainly room for clearer vision and fuller knowledge than any yet available on the subject.

Man has not by searching found out God, and the question of His existence and relation to us is not one that seems capable of being dealt with effectively from any other point of view than that of His own revelation of Himself ; but this much may surely be said, that we need a God to explain both the world of things and the world of persons in which we find ourselves, and also to make it worth while for us as individuals to give ourselves to the community. The marvellous way in which the natural world harmonizes with the human intellect is stated in many forms as an evidence that the origin of it must be due to thought and will such as we know in ourselves, but infinitely greater. And the argument from the existence of society is stronger still ; our sense of beauty, our sense of truth, and our sense of goodness seem to be meaningless unless there is One in whom our imperfect thought, desire, and

love for these things finds its perfection. As Tennyson puts it,

The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just,  
Take the charm 'FOR EVER' from them, and they crumble  
into dust.

All our thought of nature and of society finds its natural completion in the thought of God, the Maker of all things and the Lover of mankind. But we must again repeat that this belongs to the religious side rather than to the philosophic side of our investigation.





PART III  
PRACTICAL



## CHAPTER XIII

Wanted, a better conception of the corporate life of the Church—

The testimony of a Methodist hymn concerning it—Is it a secret too sacred to criticize?—The invitation to 'handle and see'—First the knowledge of God—It depends upon character—It comes from some immediate contact with reality—Knowing God and being known by Him—The Spirit as the medium of this knowledge—The duty of the Church to test it—Its reality and value.

Is it possible to add anything to the clearness and to the content of our conception of the corporate life of the 'Body of Christ'? It may perhaps be taken for granted that when we say 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' we mean that we believe in it as living a corporate life. We do not merely wish to say that we recognize the fact that such an Institution exists, and possesses certain important characteristics, and will continue to do so.

Surely there is a Corporate Life which it lives; though directly we begin to ask questions about it, it seems to be a very illusive thing. Yet we Methodists, at any rate, have been taught to sing :

All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
Who joins us by His grace,  
And bids us, each to each restored,  
Together seek His face.

He bids us build each other up;  
And gathered into one,  
To our high calling's glorious hope  
We hand in hand go on.

The gift which He on one bestows,  
We all delight to prove ;  
The grace through every vessel flows,  
In purest streams of love.

Even now we think and speak the same,  
And cordially agree ;  
Concentred all, through Jesu's name,  
In perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,  
The common peace we feel,  
A peace to sensual minds unknown,  
A joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below  
In Jesus be so sweet,  
What heights of rapture shall we know  
When round His throne we meet !

And we feel that the words describe something of supreme value. But we have hardly dared to analyse that of which they speak. We have perhaps feared that it might evaporate in mere emotion, or fade like a vision in the common daylight. Or if sometimes we ourselves have realized for a few great moments the thrill of that life, and, therefore, have known for all the rest of our days that it was real, we thought of it as a sort of Mount of Transfiguration experience, not to be expected on common days, and hardly to be talked about at all till the rising from the dead should come.

But we have the highest of all encouragement afforded to us if we are willing to ' handle and see ' for ourselves all that we are capable of grasping and of perceiving concerning this Body and the life that is manifested in it. Let us try to put down



some of the things we can say about it, and begin with the greatest question of all, that of the nature of our knowledge of God. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord tells us plainly that this knowledge depends upon character. It is the supreme blessedness of the pure in heart that they 'see God.' We are to be kind to the unthankful and the evil, that we may be His children who makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good. It is the grave condemnation of the Ancient People of God in the Fourth Gospel that they did not recognize God in the person of His Son, but 'they that were His own received Him not.'<sup>1</sup> Our Lord's Jewish adversaries are reproached that they 'know neither Me nor My Father,'<sup>2</sup> while of the future 'conscientious' persecutors of His disciples it is explained that the reason for this strange perversion of the moral sense is that they 'have not known the Father, nor Me.'<sup>3</sup> The explanation of their failure to know God is that they have 'loved the darkness rather than the light.'<sup>4</sup> They say 'we see,' and therefore their sin remains,<sup>5</sup> for their power of vision exists, but is becoming atrophied for lack of use. We must conclude that the knowledge of God comes from some 'direct contact with reality,' which the bad will of an evil heart absolutely prevents.

Our Lord's claim to Philip that to know Himself is to know the Father gives us a clue to this immediate contact with reality. For the knowledge which Philip had of Christ was the knowledge that a friend has of his friend, and that a loyal man has of the person to whom he gives his confidence. It came from living

<sup>1</sup> John i. 11.    <sup>2</sup> John viii. 19, 55.    <sup>3</sup> John xvi. 3.    <sup>4</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>5</sup> John ix. 41.

with Him, and was the effect of the impact of Christ's personality upon that of His disciple.

St. Paul helps us to grasp a great fact concerning this knowledge<sup>1</sup> when he deliberately changes the word, and, instead of speaking of knowing God, speaks of being known by Him. It is one of the great features of personal knowledge that it matters more to us to feel that a person with whom we have to do understands us than that we understand him. For if we understand another thoroughly, we feel that ours is the superior life. We may have something to give to them, but they have nothing to add to us, for we have already absorbed all that they can contribute to our life. A child often seems to feel this about a younger child. But a person who can understand us is our superior. He is incalculable, and is a source whence we may expect personal good. The sense of dependence, confidence, and expectation is awakened. It is a great knowledge of God to realize that He has searched us and known us, and there is not a word in our tongue but He knows it altogether.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the nature and method of our knowledge of God, that is a very illuminating word which St. Paul writes about God's self-revelation through the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> He appeals to our knowledge of ourselves, which is more intimate and immediate than the knowledge which any one else can possibly have of us. Then he goes on to say that the Spirit of God possesses this same intimate and immediate knowledge of God; and, finally, that this Spirit of God, possessed of this knowledge of Him, has been received by us for the express purpose 'that we

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 9 and 1 Cor. viii. 3.      <sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxxix.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 11.

might know the things that are freely given to us by God.'<sup>1</sup> Probably this last periphrasis is quite deliberate, and the Apostle did not mean to say bluntly 'that we might know God.' It is very possible to open the door here to a very ugly and dangerous fanaticism. But so far as St. Paul goes we may go. We know 'the things freely given to us by God,' the 'contents of the Christian consciousness' through the Spirit of God within us, through an immediate contact in the sphere of the inner life. That, be it noted, is the way in which we know our best-loved, most trusted friends. There is a contact of heart with heart, of spirit with spirit, which gives us a certainty of more value to us than any other in the world.

This knowledge of God through the Spirit is directly associated by St. Paul with the life of the Church. It is not an individual possession apart from the fellowship. The man who claims such knowledge, and the authority it brings, must bring his claim to the test of the common judgement of the Christian community.<sup>2</sup> The Spirit will not contradict Himself, and what He says through the individual must be recognized by the Body as a whole.

As to the reality of such knowledge in the sphere of the Christian life, I will content myself with one remark. It is that there exist in our world to-day, around us and among us, a large number of persons who, if they were asked about any practical question of conduct arising in the path of duty, would know the mind of Christ concerning it far more accurately and much more readily than they would the opinion

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 37.

and attitude of their closest friends. That knowledge must be a real one which enables men so to understand the character and will of the Lord that they know without doubt or hesitation, and equally without mistake, what His solution would be of the practical problems of their life. I am not claiming that they could solve all the puzzles that ingenuity could invent, but I am claiming that they do not miss the way; they do not do evil and think it is good, and will not have at the last to excuse themselves for a wasted life on the ground of their ignorant sincerity.

By Thine unerring Spirit led,  
We shall not in the desert stray;  
We shall not full direction need,  
Nor miss our providential way;  
As far from danger as from fear,  
While love, almighty love, is near.

## CHAPTER XIV

The life and teaching of our Lord—His method of training His disciples—Salt and Light—The common meal and the Lord's Supper—His horror of an unforgiving spirit—Excommunication and Absolution—The Fourth Gospel—Love one another—'One as we are one'—The promise of the Spirit—The issue of impenitence.

THE life and teaching of our Lord give us some very important lessons on the corporate life which we are trying to study. Let us first take the method which He adopted for the training of the Twelve. 'He appointed twelve,' we are told, 'that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.'<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the method of training He adopted was the living of a common life with them. He ventured everything on it; so far as we know, no single saying of His was preserved by being written down at the time. Although He attached the very highest value to His own words, He took no steps to give them permanence by any other method than by making sure that they should be in His disciples' hearts. And to-day, while again and again the different Evangelists report Him differently so far as actual language is concerned, the personal impression is so identical that Christians have not felt that they needed to make any spiritual difficulty out of the variance in the reports.

They have told us very little indeed about this

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 14.



common life as they actually lived it, but one result of it was the creation within them of such a character that they were able to reproduce for the world the impression made by Him on their own souls. The mind of Christ had become their mind. They tell us frankly of their own misunderstandings of Him during their fellowship. They can afford to speak freely, because they are so sure that finally they have learned Christ, and ' *know* Him whom they have believed.' Such a word as that addressed to Philip, ' Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? ' <sup>1</sup> reveals to us the aim He had before Him in living with them. The Lord gave Himself up to live a common life with these men and women, and risked the whole gospel upon His success in making them know Him, and thus making them capable of receiving His Spirit. Nothing less than such a life of fellowship could have made them His apostles, capable of going out to win the world for Him.

Our Lord placed in the forefront of His programme for His disciples that they were to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.<sup>2</sup> These two figures bring out with great force and clearness the central place of fellowship in His Church, regarded as an aggressive force. They were to be possessed of a spiritual energy that should attack and claim all with whom they came into contact. The force within them was to be one which would restrain sin as the salt keeps the meat from corruption. And it was to come upon the consciousness of the outsiders as light, revealing the evil of their lives and the way of escape. His disciples were to be sent out as sheep

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 13, 14.

among wolves ; the evil social influences into which they would be plunged would certainly enter into them and ruin their own characters unless some expulsive force could be found. But this principle of attack, this stronger social force which He was implanting within them, would be their own protection at the same time as it was the means of winning the world. He would have them live the ordinary social life ; they were to give to him that asked them, and to ask for things themselves, and receive them thankfully, to be willing always to do kindnesses and to take them ; and their one protection against the evil spirit of current society was to be just the outflow of this new social consciousness of the Kingdom, the missionary spirit which made them both light and salt.

In this common life He attached great importance to a common meal. The institution of the Lord's Supper has given His Church in all the ages its best opportunity of fellowship. Gathered round His table, feeding on Him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving, His people have realized their oneness with each other as well as with Him. They have *known* themselves to be one body, and have known that the life which they have lived by the faith of the Son of God was the one life supremely worth living.

But we are not to think that the Lord's Supper was the only occasion on which the common meal was made a matter of great spiritual importance. The phrases used in the accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Last Supper, of how He took the loaf and, looking up to heaven, gave thanks, blessed it, break, and shared it between them, seem to indicate that this was a daily custom.

He was known to the two disciples at Emmaus 'in the breaking of the bread.'<sup>1</sup> Such a phrase cannot depend upon the one event of the Last Supper, however great its influence upon them. Moreover, it hardly seems likely that these two were actually present on that occasion.

The common meal was a matter of great importance for the early fellowship after the Resurrection. Eating their food with gladness and singleness of heart<sup>2</sup> was a mark of discipleship and of fellowship in the corporate life that was very noticeable. We cannot but conclude that it had been learned from Him. It is probable that the corporate church life of our day loses very heavily indeed from neglecting this simple matter. The connexion between social life and meals is so deep and far-reaching that it cannot be anything but a grave mistake to neglect it in the life of the Church.

Another matter that deserves very careful consideration with regard to our Lord's attitude towards the common life is the deep horror He seems to have had of an unforgiving spirit.<sup>3</sup> The way in which His words about refusal to forgive are reported bears very strong testimony to the deep feeling and passion with which they were originally spoken. To Him an unforgiving spirit must have been a very much more serious matter than it is in the thoughts of most of His followers to-day. It was better, He said, to leave the worship of God unperformed than to delay reconciliation with a brother;<sup>4</sup> and the whole gift of salvation was imperilled for the man who refused forgiveness

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 15, xviii. 35; Mark xi. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 23-24.

to his fellow. It is only from such a point of view as we are trying to gain about the corporate life that such an attitude is really intelligible. But if it is true that the life of fellowship is the life eternal ; if it is true that fellowship is essentially one, and that there is no room in God's universe for companies who will have nothing to do with one another while each of them claims relation to God, then the man who refuses communion to his fellow practically condemns the rejected person to hell. There is no other place for him. If he is thrust out of our fellowship, and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, he is thrust out of Theirs. Unless, therefore, the rejected person be such a one as God Himself is sentencing to eternal perdition, the person who rejects him is putting himself into violent antagonism with God ; for God desires to save that man, God wants his fellowship, calls him and claims him ; and if we thrust him away, we are guilty of a very much worse sin than we have usually imagined, for we are opposing the whole saving purpose of God ! It is matter of common experience in Christian church life that nothing arrests the work of God and paralyses it more quickly or more certainly than an unforgiving spirit. The fact that this is so would probably be admitted by all experienced Christian workers. The reason for it becomes more apparent from the view we are getting of the inner nature of the fellowship itself.

The teaching given in Matt. xviii. affords additional light on the Lord's attitude with regard to the common life, for it deals with this grave subject of exclusion, in the cases where exclusion becomes absolutely necessary. The man who has



wronged his brother is first of all to be dealt with alone, that he may, if possible, not be humiliated by the publication of his wrong deed. If this fails, two or three are to be called in, again saving him, so far as is possible, from public shame. In the final resort the whole company must judge ; for he may not be rejected even on the testimony of the wise and intimate friends who have been first chosen. The whole company must see and decide that he is a person with whom it is impossible to have fellowship. And then the Lord deliberately associates Himself with His people in excluding him. He is in their midst when they sorrowfully part company with the impenitent wrong-doer, just as He is in their midst when they agree to ask for blessings in His name. The power of exclusion must belong to the corporate body, for it only amounts to the power of self-preservation. They cannot allow the terrible disintegration which comes from the open antagonism and malice of unreconciled and unloving men.

With the power of expulsion the power of absolution is granted too. They must have the right to forgive, and the assurance that when they do forgive God forgives too ; and that they are acting in harmony with Christ and supported by His authority when they restore the penitent. The terrible evils that have come upon the Church through the misunderstanding and the misuse of these solemn powers must not blind our eyes to the fact that if people are to live a corporate Christian life it is necessary that they should be able to protect themselves from evil men ; and if the life is indeed Christian, it is equally necessary that they should be able, with the consciousness of authority, also to do the



Christian deed of healing and forgiving. The turning of these two powers into the exclusive prerogative of a class, and the separation of them from the fellowship to which they essentially belong, has been a very grave damage indeed to the life of the body of Christ.

What we have said about the way in which the Lord trusted His words to the corporate consciousness of the men who had learned to live with Him gives us great confidence when we come to the question of the reports of His sayings in the Fourth Gospel. That the actual language has undergone a change through being reproduced, after being pondered over for a long life by one who has dwelt deep with his Master's teaching and personality, is abundantly apparent. But the Christian consciousness has always recognized that, however this may be, we have in the report which St. John gives us the very Mind of Christ. And criticism cannot make us afraid that we are on doubtful ground when we accept the sayings recorded in the Fourth Gospel as truly and worthily representing His teaching. The emphasis laid on the exhortation to love one another<sup>1</sup> may, therefore, be pleaded here without any apologies or hesitation. It has been often set aside, and sometimes it has seemed as if Christian men were willing to love everybody else except their fellow Christians. The heathen abroad or the reprobates at home have called forth sympathy or toil when there has been nothing but impatience, criticism, and bitterness for the people inside the fold. This is a fatal misunderstanding of the Christian temper. There is nothing that weakens the Church more in its

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 34.

witness to the world outside, whether at home or abroad, than the lack of charity within ; and one of the most tragic things in the present day is the way in which different regiments of the army of the Lord seem inclined to turn their ammunition on one another rather than to co-operate to win the world. St. John is surely right in representing that the supreme prayer of the Lord for His followers whom He was leaving was ' that they may all be one ; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us.'<sup>1</sup> There must be for the people of Christ a unity comparable with that of the Holy Trinity itself. This supreme example of unity, be it remembered, is not one of uniformity, but one which transcends the deepest differences. It is impossible to say that this prayer is yet fully answered, as surely it will be.

He promised that their need of His own presence in their fellowship should be supplied by the coming of Another Comforter whom the Father would send in His Name.<sup>2</sup> His presence with them should verily be the presence of God and of Christ in their common life. He was to be their Teacher and Remembrancer ; and was, through them, to bring conviction to the unbelieving and sinful world. His presence, moreover, would be their Authority for the expulsion of the unworthy and the restoration of the penitent.<sup>3</sup>

We cannot leave the subject of the Lord's teaching on the corporate life without a word as to the grave issue of impenitence. The fellowship is one of children of the light, and it is essentially antagonistic to the darkness. It makes unceasing war on sin,

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 21.<sup>2</sup> John xiv.-xvi.<sup>3</sup> John xx. 22, 23.

and moral evil is intolerable to it ; and whenever people are conceived of as rejecting the light, and wilfully clinging to wickedness, they are always pictured as outside the fellowship, in the darkness where there is wailing, or on the rubbish heaps where the refuse of the city is consumed. The words of Jesus cannot be construed except as a grave warning of the possibility of final impenitence, and an equally grave declaration as to the separation from the company of God, and the black ruin that belongs to it. He taught a final separation and judgement that parts the children of light from the children of darkness. If these latter are left to themselves, no longer held up and sustained by the kindly human fellowship, and no longer endured by the long-suffering of God, their condition is too terrible to think about—the darkness is darkness that can be felt, and whether there be in it any ray of light from God is not for us to say ; for He, the source of all our seeing, shows us none. If there be any more resources in the redeeming love of God, they have not even been hinted at by any word of Christ.

## CHAPTER XV

The limitations of the Lecture—What is left out is neither denied nor ignored—A selection from the New Testament teaching—The company in the Upper Room—Pentecost and its gift—The importance of the Individual: Stephen: Antioch—The 'gifts' of the Spirit and their use—They equip the Church for its life—St. Paul's letters as a contribution to the common life—The community as judge—The Sacraments and the common life—The churches and the Church—The true Israel—St. Paul's outlook on the world-order—Summing up all in Christ who is Head of the Church—St. Peter's language about the common life—Fellowship in the Life Eternal.

THE limitations of this Lecture do not permit of anything like a thorough examination of the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Church. It is only in a very incidental way that such important questions as those concerning the Ministry and the Sacraments can be touched upon at all. A warning word is perhaps necessary lest it should be thought that small importance is attached to them. I am anxious to set forth those things which seem to me to be in most danger of being overlooked, and I feel but little compunction in omitting even far more important things which are being clearly and generally taught. What I have to say is my contribution to a common life. It will, I hope, have its moment of attention, but it cannot have more. All the rest will go on saying their more important things, and, I with the others, shall be edified by

them. This fragment is brought forward in the hope that it will fit, with others, into a whole made more complete by its inclusion. The following notes from New Testament teaching about the life of the Church are selected with this idea in mind.

The Acts of the Apostles shows us the new common life in its first beginning. The story of the company of the Upper Room proceeding to elect a successor to Judas Iscariot is most instructive.<sup>1</sup> They are just as conscious on that occasion of the absence of their Leader as they are of His Presence later on when they say, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.'

At Pentecost the great Gift is bestowed upon them, and its symbol is 'cloven tongues as of fire,'<sup>2</sup> tongues with which to glorify God, to share experience, and to convert the world. Could any token possibly be devised that would show more clearly the nature of the life they were to live? They immediately began to proclaim the wonderful works of God, to win converts, and to live a common life.

The importance of the individual is shown by the story of Stephen.<sup>3</sup> He dares to think deeply, and to him is given a larger vision of the world-significance of this common life. He sees that it is inconsistent with the Mosaic customs such as circumcision, and with the Temple-worship. These two things must go. The Jews kill him for saying so, but the seed has been sown. And not only does it germinate within the fellowship, but 'Saul was consenting unto his death.'

The action of the Church at Antioch<sup>4</sup> (or was

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 15-26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vi., vii.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xiii. 1-3.



it the inner circle of the 'prophets and teachers'?) was distinctly corporate. We are not told through whom it was that the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul.' Probably they never thought that it mattered. Similarly the earlier impulse to proclaim the gospel to the God-fearing Greeks who attended the synagogue comes from unnamed men, and is adopted by the common will of the company, because it is recognized as the mind of the Spirit.

The converts appear to have received the Holy Ghost in the form of some manifest charismatic 'gift' for the service of the community. Three special cases are cited: (1) Cornelius and his friends received the 'gift' on hearing Peter preach,<sup>1</sup> and he, recognizing it as indubitable evidence that they belonged to the company, commanded them to be baptized as a necessary consequence. (2) The Samaritan converts believed and were baptized, but did not receive the 'gift' until the apostles came and laid their hands upon them.<sup>2</sup> Probably they did not fully recognize till then that they were indeed members of the Christian company. (3) Paul finds converts at Ephesus who are imperfectly instructed and baptized with John's baptism.<sup>3</sup> He proclaims to them the great Christian facts, and bids them be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then he lays his hands upon them, and the manifest tokens of the Spirit's presence appear in them also.

The sense that every individual has a contribution to bring to the common life, and does not enter it merely as a receiver, is very strong in the writings of St. Paul. This is plain both from the lists he gives

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 44-48.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 14-17.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 1-7.

of the various gifts of the Spirit,<sup>1</sup> and the way in which, in the disorderly Corinthian church, he maintains the right of every member to bring his contribution to the common worship so long as he does so in a considerate and reverent manner. As Lindsay says :

St. Paul seems to look on the manifestation of these gifts of praise, prayer, teaching, and prophecy within the congregation at Corinth as an evidence that the Christian community there was completely furnished within its own membership with all the gifts needed for the building up in faith and 'works.'<sup>2</sup>

So also St. Paul writes about himself to the Christians at Rome, saying, ' I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.'<sup>3</sup> The reception of the Spirit at Pentecost, whatever else it meant, was certainly regarded as the reception of a power to serve the community, and add to the value of the corporate life. In writing his own letters to the churches St. Paul made a supremely valuable contribution to their common life. It must have been a splendid faith in the communities at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus that prompted him to share with them his own hardest and highest thinking in the way he has done. The value of the individual to the community could hardly have a loftier expression.

The company as a company is to receive these contributions, and to pass judgement on their

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 4-11 ; Eph. iv. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Church and the Ministry*, Lindsay, p. 49.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 11.

spiritual value.<sup>1</sup> This last responsibility, the responsibility of the company for a common corporate act of judgement upon the matter presented to it for fellowship and worship, seems to be almost totally ignored to-day. Yet St. John gives a similar direction to that of St. Paul, and bids those to whom he is writing to prove the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.<sup>2</sup> One wonders what would be the effect of the recognition of such a responsibility and duty in the churches of to-day. The replacing of individual criticism by such a common considered judgement on the value of that which is presented to us as material for the spiritual life would be an adventure worth the trying. For this is a matter in which we have certainly got away from New Testament lines.

The two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper occupy a very prominent and important place in all that St. Paul tells us concerning the common Christian life. Baptism was very far indeed from being merely an individual act. Nor was it something only concerning the individual and the Lord. The Church was an essential part of the matter. The converts were 'baptized into one body.'<sup>3</sup> From the point of view of the individual himself, the same act of choice which renounced sin and accepted Christ accepted Him as the Head of the Church, and therefore accepted His people in Him. From the point of view of the Church, the penitent, who has been led to Christ and instructed by the community, is now received by the community acting in its Master's name. The insignificance of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 29.<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 1-3.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 13.

the person actually administering the rite is the significance of its meaning as a communal act.

The church-meeting for the celebration of the Lord's Supper stands side by side with the meeting for edification. Its significance as an act of corporate union is insisted on. Those who partake of it are 'one loaf.'<sup>1</sup> Unworthy participation may be a cause even of illness and death.<sup>2</sup> Participation without true charity and kindness to each other destroys the character of the meal. It is not 'eating the Lord's Supper.'<sup>3</sup> The true communion with Christ may be contrasted with the false communion that idol worshippers have with their god.<sup>4</sup>

It sanctifies those who take part in it so that they are no longer their own. They are 'one spirit' with the Lord.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Sacrament has an element of common witness. At the Lord's Table His people 'proclaim the Lord's death till He come.'<sup>6</sup>

St. Paul's use of language about 'the churches' and 'the church' has been thoroughly studied, and I think that it is generally agreed that he sees a sort of microcosm in every particular gathering. The Head is there, and the members, and it is the Body of Christ. But Christ is not divided, and all these apparently separate bodies are in the highest reality one, and they will certainly become one in the consummation to which we look forward. Then 'the church' is the Bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, it is the 'Holy Temple,' and in it reunited humanity is presented 'in one body' to God.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 17 (marg.). <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 30. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 20. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x. 20.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 17. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.



St. Paul's doctrine of the church as the true Israel is another matter of great importance for our study, concerning which, nevertheless, I judge that it is not necessary to say very much because the facts are admitted and well known. It is all the more remarkable because of the intensity of his own Jewish patriotism. The things that had formerly been 'gain' to him were his own national, religious privileges.<sup>1</sup> He was a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. His circumcision, his legal obedience, his part in the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises<sup>2</sup> were, in his estimation, the highest treasures a man could possess. For Israel's sake, were it possible, he would still be ready to be accursed.

All this treasure had however been ruined for him by a guilty conscience. The tremendous fact of sin had confronted him, and turned his privileges into his condemnation. But Christ had loved him and given Himself for him. He had removed the condemnation and restored his freedom. Paul's response to the dying love of Christ was to surrender all to Him. Whatever stood in the way was 'loss,' however great its value.

When however he found Christ, he discovered that He was the End of the Law, the purpose for which it had originally been given. He was the true Seed of Abraham, and Heir of all the promises of God. His redeemed people was, therefore, the true Israel, the circumcision, the elect, the people for God's own possession. Their destiny contained the meaning of the whole movement of the Old

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 4.



Testament, and indeed the whole progress of the ages. Coming to Christ for personal salvation and sacrificing all for Him, St. Paul, therefore, had found the reality, the shadow of which he had felt it so great a thing to surrender when he abandoned his Jewish spiritual privilege. God is going to sum up all things in Christ, 'in whom we were made a heritage,'<sup>1</sup> and has given 'Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, and fullness of Him that filleth all in all.'<sup>2</sup> He has created in Himself a new humanity reconciled to God through the cross,<sup>3</sup> a humanity which is growing together into the final and perfect temple of God.<sup>4</sup>

St. Peter expresses the corporate unity of the Christian community in similar language to that of St. Paul. Believers are living stones being 'built up a spiritual house';<sup>5</sup> they are 'an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.'<sup>6</sup> They are the fulfilment of Hosea's pathetic prophecy, 'Which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.'<sup>7</sup> 'Unfeigned love of the brethren'<sup>8</sup> is the mark of the new life.

The First Epistle of John is written about the 'Fellowship in the Life Eternal.'<sup>9</sup> It has been worthily expounded from that point of view by Dr. Findlay. The fellowship is with the Father and the Son; it means absolute antagonism to sin and deliverance from it; it means growing light and spiritual strength; it is rooted in the faith

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 10, 11.    <sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 22, 23.    <sup>3</sup> Eph. ii. 15, 16.    <sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 20.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.    <sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.    <sup>7</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 10.    <sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. i. 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, Findlay.

that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and it goes forward to the life eternal, when He will be manifested and His people will be like Him. It demands self-purification and the practice of righteousness and brotherly love. Brotherly love, indeed, is the evidence of the reality of our possession of this life, but it must be in deed and truth. We are entitled to have boldness towards God, and shall receive answers to our petitions from Him. He gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. It is the duty of the community to test the spirits (of would-be prophets) by their confession of Jesus. Brotherly love is the essential matter of the common life, and it means communion with God, which, indeed, cannot exist without it. Love to God means loyalty to Christ and testimony to His gift of eternal life. The letter is written to assure its readers of the real meaning of their fellowship, namely, eternal life. This will give them boldness to pray for one another. The writer ends with great affirmations of the reality of the deliverance from sin, of God's being on their side, of the fact of the Incarnation, and its consequence of union with Christ. They are in contact with the two great final realities, God and life.

## CHAPTER XVI

Limitations of the Corporate Life caused by space and time—

Time: the small amount of living possible to us—'All the time there is'—The Sabbath—How much time can we spare?—Space—The persons with whom we can meet—The church essentially a meeting—The 'true church'—Visible or invisible—The 'soul' of the church—Organization or life—The paradox of fellowship—Wilful separation—Kindred spirits—What is the organization good for?—The eggshell.

THE necessary limitations of the corporate life of the Christian Church as lived in this world are very large indeed. They are caused by space and time, and perhaps time limits us most. Unless we stop to consider it specially, we generally fail to notice how curiously small is the amount of living which we can do in our present state. A large proportion of our time is taken up with sleep, another considerable part with our meals. The work we have to do in order to provide for our bodily needs claims much of the remainder; and there is only a small fraction of time, recurring at considerable intervals, that we are able to give at all to this, our highest form of life. But not only is the current of life claimed for all these purposes, the outflow itself is a surprisingly small one. We cannot think of more than two or three things at once, and not very effectively of more than one. Most of us cannot hold together the links of a chain of argument unless it be an extremely brief one. It is true that our memory

helps us by bringing the past into the present, and our will helps us by reaching forward into the future that we desire ; but when all this is said, our actual living is done in an amazingly small area. Yet we know that even within these limits there is possible to us a very noble and beautiful life. It is said that Archbishop Temple once told a clergyman who complained that he had not sufficient time for some duty which was expected of him, ' You have got all the time there is.' It is true that we have all the time there is, but there is nothing that calls for our sense of stewardship more than the using of it.

The provision of a Sabbath rest that should set people free from the lower claims and toils of life was a contribution of the greatest value to religion. People have wondered that what they are pleased to call a mere ritual command should have kept its place inside the moral code ; but when the importance of time is duly realized, the reasonableness of its position there is no longer open to doubt. The calendar and the time-table are of great spiritual importance, though, of course, we are not to imagine that they are intended to dominate us so as in any degree to rob us of our own spiritual initiative and freedom. But while man is ' lord of the Sabbath,' it is at his grave peril that he will neglect to use for its right purpose the day that was ' made for man.' It is not that there is any moral difference in days. There is no moral difference between the hour of ten o'clock at night and the hour of ten o'clock in the morning ; but for a very large number of people there is a very grave moral difference between their being at bed at one of these hours and being there

at the other. The man who does not do his utmost to protect the common time available for living the life of fellowship with God and His people is surely guilty of a waste that is a serious moral offence. He is sinning not against a ritual law, but against the life of fellowship with God and His people.

Here, then, is an item of cost. 'All the time there is' is so little, and has so many claims upon it, that real sacrifice is involved in the resolute devotion of a fixed recurrent part of it to the purposes of religious life. One of the problems of our own day is that of the amount and distribution of the portions of time to be so given. Of course, the first question is how much we *want* this kind of life. If our interests are really somewhere else, and what we are prepared to give to it is only a necessary minimum that will save us from losing religion altogether, our decision will be very different from what it is if our own judgement and heart's desire have ratified the verdict that this is indeed the one life which of all others is supremely worth living. The Church will settle, in its corporate capacity, the question of how many times and for how long it shall meet in harmony not only with the pressure of other claims, but most of all with that of its desire for common action, common thought, common prayer, and common emotion.

The limitations of space are chiefly felt in the fact that they become limitations as to the persons with whom it is possible for us to hold immediate fellowship. We can do something by way of correspondence, we can do much by means of books, we can join with the absent in prayer; but after all the



most important fellowship is that which we have with people when we see them face to face, speak to them, and listen to their voice.

The church is essentially a meeting. When people discuss the question which of the various existing organizations of Christian people is to be regarded as the 'true church,' or when they raise that wider inquiry as to the visibility or invisibility of the true church, they always appear, at least to me, to involve their discussions in some unnecessary confusion by failing to remember what is implied in that simple fact that the church is a meeting. It is 'where two or three are gathered together' that the Presence is promised which makes the Holy Catholic Church. 'The church' is not a static fact of life. It is always 'coming to be.' The people who maintain its visibility are perfectly right so far as this, that the only manifestation of the life of the church which we can observe at all is in meetings. Membership is visible, for you can count who are present at a meeting, or a series of meetings. But the church is invisible in another sense. The life of it is not fully and finally expressed in the actual meetings. They are only a very partial and limited expression of something of which it must be said that 'it doth not yet appear.' But, perhaps, because we are still oppressed by a bad mediaeval philosophy which we have not yet succeeded in eradicating, people will persist in regarding 'the church' as a 'substance' of which the meetings are the 'accidents.' They want to ask, What is the church when there is no meeting? Is it non-existent, a thing which merely lives on by intervals from one meeting to another? Just so do we ask,

What is the Soul of the individual? Is it merely the connected totality of the experiences of life, or is there a unifying Substance behind it? Most of us believe undoubtingly in the existence of a free, responsible Personality, the Unity of which is more than an addition sum; but if we try to find it, and describe and label it, we give ourselves away to the derision of our enemies. The totality of the experiences *must* be all we can *find*, though it need not be all that we believe in. So in regard to the church, *the totality of the meetings is all we can find*. Whatever Holy Catholic Church means beside that is invisible, and, moreover, it is quite as much indefinable as invisible. There are no other experiences except the meetings.

The question—Which of the various companies who claim the title is the true church?—answers itself. All of them are, so far as they are meetings of believing people with Christ in the midst. None of them are in any other sense. The truth is that the idea of organization, which we have largely taken over from the inorganic world, has obsessed us and seriously misled us. We can hardly free ourselves from the notion that the ‘church’ necessarily involves some political form of government, some appointed officials, some machine (it is really a much better word than organization just here) which has to be run in a particular fashion. But Paul’s two great illustrations of the body of Christ and the temple of God will neither of them bear this load. Take the latter first. He says, ‘Each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple.’<sup>1</sup> Surely his idea is that the different

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 21.

meetings held in various places, all of them expressions of the same life, tend to unity, and will finally become one temple of God comprising all the living stones. As two drops of water coming together become one drop, so two companies of Christians, each having Christ in the midst, when they can come together, should immediately and certainly become one company. The several buildings become the one Temple. Or, if the figure of the body of Christ be appealed to, let it be noted that it is used of any of the local gatherings ; there is never any suggestion that one such gathering is only a limb. The Head is there and His members ; and it is the body of Christ, whether it is the little church that meets in a house or the larger group of the great city or the final company that no man can number.

Here we have the great paradox of the life of fellowship : *The available part is equal to the whole.* Of course, this is only true for the immediate purposes of living the life, but it is true for them. The true church is 'the blessed company of all faithful people.' All the saints in all the ages, those in heaven and those on earth, are members of it, yet we can become 'very members incorporate in the mystical body of God's Son' if we unite ourselves in communion with the few available people with whom space and time permit us to meet. A real Christian fellowship with them is in every case sufficient for the true and full living of the corporate life, provided we do not ourselves further limit our opportunity by the unjust and unrighteous exclusion of any one who by God's appointment is in proximity to us. The 'neighbour' to him that fell among the thieves was the man who had mercy upon him,

and our potential neighbours are the people to whom we can use mercy and kindness because they are within our reach. It is a ruinous thing, then, for Christian people to refuse fellowship with any who are within their reach on any other ground than the necessary one which arises when we cannot but be convinced that they are children of the darkness and not of the light. The tragical loss to the Christian life that occurs from people wilfully separating themselves from other members of the one body is such as we shall never realize till we see it from the point of view of restored communion. Indeed, I think that Ezekiel's words will be true again, and that when once the 'broken sticks' are united we shall 'loathe ourselves' as we begin to realize for the first time how much we have lost, and how much Christ has been hindered by the unnecessary and unreasonable divisions that have kept us apart.

Having said this, I want to plead earnestly that even two or three are sufficient for the full fellowship of the church, provided always that two or three are what space and time will allow for the purposes of the common life.

Moreover, the idea that fellowship needs what are called 'kindred spirits' has led to very grave mistakes. There can be the very truest kinship of spirit between the old and the young, the strong and the weak, the wise and the simple; and the idea that only people of the same age or social standing or education can really helpfully talk and pray together, and co-operate in the witness-bearing work of the Church, is a totally and lamentably mistaken one.



Unless there had been some provision of this kind made by God, it is obvious that considerable numbers of His scattered people could not have had the full privileges of the Christian life. But the testimony of very many of the saints is available to show us that the life can be lived even under what seem to be the most adverse conditions in this respect. There is no excuse for the plea that people are entitled to abstain from church fellowship in uncongenial surroundings. If they are in the place to which God sends them, these surroundings are a part of His knowledge of their circumstances ; and they will find themselves able, if they will trust Him, in these surroundings to realize the blessings and gain the experiences of the fullest spiritual life.

No doubt it requires a very genuine humility for some men to anticipate getting any good from the company of people who have not been blessed with their own educational or social privileges, but it is one of the cases where assuredly God gives grace to the humble. Many a Christian saint can testify that he has received, and, so far as he is able to judge, received far more than he has given, from fellowship with some apparently extremely unlikely person into whose company he has been thrown, and with whom he has talked and prayed about the things of God.

But we shall be asked, Is the organization, then, nothing? Are those stately ecclesiastical fabrics which have had such prominent part in the religious history of Christ's people of no real account in the matter? There is, let it be admitted, considerable danger of their being undervalued by such as grasp the idea that it is only the life that makes the



church. There is also a well-known danger on the other side, that, namely, of attaching such value to organization that the importance of the life is almost or quite forgotten. The ecclesiastical structures play the same part that an eggshell plays in the life of an unhatched chick. If the shell be prematurely broken, the chick will die ; but when the chick is ready to come out into the world, the shell, now a menace to its free life, must be broken and trampled on. Judaism was such a shell. The ' middle wall of partition ' was just as necessary in the days of its building as the breaking down of it was in a greater day. Our existing church organizations probably all protect some vital principle, which is not developed enough to live without them. When that principle becomes a part of the inheritance of the whole church, and therefore has no more need of special shelter, that organization which specially protected it has no further use. The developed life has no need of a shelter, and the useless shelter tends to fetter its movements.

Of the perfected city it is written, ' I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.'<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile we all owe much gratitude, far more than we can pay, to those other churches, distinct and separate in their organization from our own, which are protecting for us and for the whole Israel of God treasures of the Christian life for proper appreciation of which we ourselves have not yet sufficient vision, and for safeguarding of which our own church order does not satisfactorily provide.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 22.

## CHAPTER XVII

Them that are without—The 'extension' of the corporate life—  
Christ loves the man outside—Christianity always evangelistic and missionary—These impulses felt in the common life—The present condition of the non-Christian world—  
A time of opportunity for Christ—The new life of our days—  
Our natural jealousy—The new life comes from God—  
The need of intercession—Venturing to accept it and claim it for Christ—The present social order—New Testament difficulties—The disintegration and recrystallization of society around us—Labour questions, colour questions, and the like—Christianity is revolutionary.

THE relationship of the Christian corporate life to 'them that are without' is specially instructive because it brings home to us the boundless greatness of that life. It has no limits either in its extension or in its intension. Its full meaning is the partaking of the life of the Father and the Son. In company with the People of God, we are to share in the Divine existence itself, nothing less than that. And its full extent is as great as its full meaning. 'With angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven,' and with all the living, loving persons whom God has ever made for Himself, we are to live this life and experience its blessedness.

Our true primal relation, therefore, to every person who is at present outside the Christian fellowship is a supreme longing that he should come in. This longing does not arise directly from acquaintance with the person himself; its immediate source is

sympathy with the mind of Christ. He is able to feel for the outsider all the compassion that our limitations of knowledge and sympathy prevent us from feeling. We are sure He loves the man outside and died for him, as He 'loved me and gave Himself for me.' And the first reason why the Christian wants the man outside is because he knows that Christ wants him.

The love of Christ doth me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men.

But the mind of Christ is so given to His people that they also directly share His compassion and desire to save. Only this involves some sort of acquaintance with the man outside. It is, therefore, the 'brother whom we have seen'<sup>1</sup> to whom our first evangelistic desires go out. For it is hard for us to realize that even Christ wants the man of whom we have never known enough to be able to form any definite thought about him at all. Christianity, therefore, has always been an evangelistic religion with regard to the people with whom it is brought into contact either as friends or foes; it has always been a missionary religion with regard to those peoples of whose condition and needs it was able to form any definite conception. And it has been evangelistic and missionary just in proportion as it has been a religion of fellowship. Those who forsake the assembling of themselves together have never very keenly desired either to evangelize their neighbours or the heathen world. For the whole life is of a piece. And one of the supreme

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 20.

dangers of allowing the Christian life of our time to take on a form in which the importance of fellowship is not realized is that of the immediate resultant weakening both of evangelistic and missionary zeal. It is one and the same impulse, that which is expressed by the much-prized line,

O, let me commend my Saviour to you,

that makes the evangelist, the missionary, and the lover of Christian fellowship.

And the company, when it is together, feels these impulses as part of the common life. The church itself becomes evangelistic and missionary. The Holy Spirit, present in all hearts, says, 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul'; and they do not remember through which individual He said it, for it was the common mind of them all. Such events only could happen where the common life was lived at its highest and best. And when the church as a whole becomes evangelistic it not only separates Barnabas and Saul; it goes out and does the work itself. There is much witness for Christ that can best be given by the company acting in unison. What evangelistic preacher does not know the difference it makes to him if he is surrounded by a praying, believing company, as keen as he is himself on winning men for the Master? The common fellowship inevitably leads on to a common witness-bearing.

It would be very helpful if somebody would write a history of Christian missions to the outside world showing their relation to the spiritual life of the church and the knowledge existing in it of the

condition and needs of the people evangelized. I think such a record would bear a very plain moral. The opening up of the world in our own days has created a situation in which the question of the missionary spirit in the church is one of vital importance. The whole world is being not only explored but exploited in the interests of business and politics. The backward races of mankind are, often violently, and with very little regard indeed for their own social organizations, being brought into contact with the wealthier and more powerful civilized races. Many of them are discovering that they too can learn the arts of civilization so far as to amass wealth and develop military power. It is a matter of very grave concern for our world-order that the Christian leaven shall work rapidly among these peoples. But that, from our point of view, is a secondary matter. This break-up of the social order of the semi-civilized and uncivilized peoples is accompanied by a complete breakdown of their religions. Only one, that of Islam, seems to show any power of endurance; the others are all melting. But there must come a recrystallization; and, when it comes, it will, if it is not itself Christian, be a very serious danger to the Christian religion. Even the instinct of self-preservation ought, therefore, to rouse us to great efforts to use the present opportunity to preach Christ. But, of course, the supreme matter is that it is a day of opportunity for Him. He may come to His own just now with regard to all the people whom He loves, if we are earnest and faithful in evangelizing. If the life of fellowship with Him is the greatest thing in the world, then our greatest call just now is to make



Him known to all the peoples for whom He has waited so long. One of the first tasks that calls to His church for a life of fuller fellowship and larger spiritual power is the missionary enterprise.

But our relations to 'them that are without' are by no means limited to the adoption towards them of an evangelistic and missionary attitude. The Christian church of to-day finds itself in a world in which there is a vast amount of social organization, which, although outside its own fellowship, is by no means to be condemned as evil. There is a world of literature, science, and art, and also a world of politics and social life containing much that is strong, good, and beautiful. The life of humanity is passing through a very springtime of bud and blossom in our days. New ambitions and hopes are being awakened on all sides. The conquest of the natural world goes forward at an unprecedentedly rapid pace; and the criticism and amendment of the social order, if it does not make the same progress, yet arouses even deeper interest. Apparently at present the church life suffers from the strong tide of purely human interests. There are so many pleasant things to enjoy, so many interesting things to study, and so many noble things to do outside the religious life that it is neglected, and its importance is forgotten by large numbers of people who do not in the least intend to be in antagonism to it. The resulting practical difficulty is a very great one, and it will need all the meekness of wisdom that the church possesses to deal with it aright.

Let us admit that we feel very jealous for our Master, and for His company, when we see hearts so full of the outside interests of intelligence and

beauty and even of moral improvement that they have no room for devotion to Him, or time for that life of which He is the Head. But sometimes, if we show our jealousy, we shall waken the same spirit on the other side. We shall be told that the world is God's world, and that we have no right to grudge people their interest and delight in it. Human society, too, belongs to Him, and the passion for betterment, for the righting of social wrongs, and the liberation of the oppressed is not one that He would frown upon. We know these things to be true, and we can see that we may easily repel people by seeming to wish to set their valued interests on one side, or even by refusing to share them. The case will not be completely met by the ascetic attitude, with its stern demand for the narrowing of life in order to the increasing of its intensity. This will, it is true, often be the practical wisdom of particular men, and wisdom will be justified of her children if they make such sacrifices for the highest life. Nor need they fear any permanent loss because apparently they have missed some lower good. But this must always be a matter for the individual. Directly society imposes ascetic restrictions in its own interests it begins to be tyrannical. Men may lay aside for themselves what they must not presume to compel their neighbours to surrender at their dictation.

Besides, this exuberant life, pushing forward in all directions, comes from God. With regard to what is definitely evil there is no doubt as to our duty of relentless antagonism, but it is not the evil but the attractive and the interesting with which we are now dealing ; and we have no right to call such

things evil, even though in our judgement they are encroaching upon the time and strength needed for the highest life of all. We must believe that God is guiding these new tides of life, and we must aim at being co-workers with Him. What, then, can we do?

First of all I suggest that there is a distinct and important intercessory life to be led by the Christian church with regard to all the people of whom we are now thinking. We can do what Job did when he offered sacrifice for his children, and said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts.'<sup>1</sup> And we ought not to think it a little thing to be able to do this. There is not only the direct power of prayer to be considered (a power we cannot over-estimate), but the indirect influence of such an attitude will be very great. We think altogether too much of compulsion as real power, whereas it effects extremely little in the personal world; and we think far too little of personal influence, though its range and potency are immensely greater. We shall be exercising the true influence of the salt if we use the opportunities of the common life for much intercession for the people whom the attractiveness of life itself seems to lure away from its greatest prize.

Another thing to be done will seem perhaps to some Christians altogether too venturesome and dangerous, though I believe it will finally prove to be the path to victory. So far as the new interests of life are true, beautiful, and good, they come from God and are part of His great Movement. Let us frankly allow them their full influence in our own

<sup>1</sup> Job i. 5.

lives ; learn the new thoughts, enjoy the new delights, and work strenuously at the new tasks, and trust the light and the salt that are in us to illuminate with Christ's radiance and to permeate with His influence the whole of the larger, deeper current in which life is flowing. Are we really afraid that there is not enough leaven in His gospel to leaven the whole of this new, complex, far-reaching life of our time ? Must the saltiness indeed evaporate and the light fail if it aims to cover such an area ? Our faith would be vain if He were not the Lord of life and the fountain whence it all springs.

The Church took the risk once of going all naked and defenceless into a savage world of fierce cruelties and ruthless hate. And the white-robed army of martyrs conquered for her, and tamed that world of brutal violence to gentleness and peace. It is ours to-day to take the greater risk of going with the same defencelessness into a pleasant and interesting world, where the danger is that we may lose the light we are carrying and forget the value of the supreme interest entrusted to us. We shall be all the braver men if we realize fully the peril of what we are doing. Those who refuse to see any danger may well find most of it ; but danger, even the danger of growing slack about the highest things, must not stop us from claiming this world also for the Lord to whom it belongs.

Our Head is He through whom all the worlds were made ; His work has a cosmic significance reaching throughout and beyond the whole range of human life. We must needs believe that the kingdoms of the world are all of them His kingdoms. The new tides of life of which we are speaking must



have come from Him, and must find their true End in Him. It is ours to welcome them, to trust Him, and not be afraid.

A third question is that of our relation to the present political order. This was a pressing matter in the New Testament times. Paul, finding much that was good in the Roman State, told his people that the powers that be are ordained of God, and counselled submission.<sup>1</sup> Peter also counselled submission, though with a much less exalted conception of the State.<sup>2</sup> Still, it was better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. The writer of the Apocalypse, however, face to face with deadly persecution, identifies Rome with the powers of evil themselves. The Christian must not accept the mark of the beast though resistance cost his life.<sup>3</sup> The political order had become, in the judgement of this prophet, definitely anti-Christian, and the only thing to do was to resist to the uttermost.

Our political order is good enough for us frankly to adopt Paul's attitude, but that does not quite settle the question. For this order is changing rapidly before our eyes. Old loyalties are fading; new, vigorous ones springing up. Mr. Norman Angell<sup>4</sup> has shown us how the new bonds of relationship between the banking interests of the civilized world cut right across the old patriotism of race and state. The same is true of manufacturing, trading, and labour interests. New solidarities are being formed, and new antagonisms are widening. What is called the 'colour question' is a most remarkable and portentous example of the rapid development of a deep

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiv. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *The Great Illusion.*



antagonism that rouses many fears concerning the future of our race. And the pressing question about our relation to the political order is the question how we stand in regard to the new solidarities and the new antagonisms. Capital and labour, the immigration of such peoples as the Chinese and Japanese, the problem of inter-marriage, the position of Kaffirs and Negroes—these are matters which press upon us to-day when we confront the various forms of the world's corporate life with the ideal that we have learned from Christ.

There are two things to do: one to assure ourselves that the solution of all the problems of life is in Christ's hands, and, therefore, resolutely to refuse to accept all anti-Christian or non-Christian solutions that may be proposed. The other is perhaps more difficult. It is to avoid talking as if we always knew the present duty with regard to these difficulties, when we do not. The Christian church, without losing a jot of its faith that the final solution is in Christ's hands, should set itself to the laborious task of trying to understand the conditions of these grave problems; for the first thing we want is more light. And I believe that one of the first things more light would show us is that some of the people we take for enemies are truly desirous to be friends if we will prove reasonable ones.

But the present movements of society go to show that the apocalyptic vision of the Book of Daniel<sup>1</sup> was nearer to fact than used to seem to be the case. The kingdom made without hands will break in pieces the existing ones. They are already being

<sup>1</sup> Dan. ii. 45.

disintegrated, and the new solidarities that follow will be disintegrated in their turn till this wonderful Life that is in us clothes itself with a garment that satisfies it. A Christian man, the meekest and most obedient and law-abiding, is at heart a revolutionary, for there is that in his faith and experience that shall turn the world upside down.

## CHAPTER XVIII

The corporate life as an education and training—We are born into the Christian Society—The solemn moment of choice—The beginning of complete corporate life—Bunyan's description—The difficulty of talking—Witness-bearing—The attainment of a level, and its danger—Wesley's experience—His problem of Entire Sanctification.

WHEN we were examining the relation of the individual to society, we saw that he was born into a society which trained and equipped him and furnished him with words, ideas, truths, and duties ; and we further saw that it was in learning the others that he learned himself.

It is almost superfluous to insist upon the truth and importance of this as it concerns the highest life which it is our business to try to understand. We are born into it. No Christian child ever needs to be introduced to Almighty God as a stranger. ' Our Father in Heaven ' and ' Gentle Jesus ' are known so early that memory cannot recall the time when they were not familiar Persons. With the Person, the duties, and especially the duty of prayer, and the reverence that accompanies it (the most fundamental of religious feelings), were likewise learned before there was any power of criticism. The great Bible stories come next with their stock of words, ideas, and actions. The Christian conception of the ' other world ' is acquired so early that it requires a good deal of after-reflection to see

how difficult it really is. And, when the boy or girl has learned the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed, the elements of Christian thought, Christian conduct, and Christian faith have, through the work of 'circumambient society' (which long words mostly mean a mother and a Sunday-school teacher), become firmly embedded in his mental and spiritual make-up. But all this while the will has been developing and finding itself, and the great crisis of choice is not long in appearing. We are, all of us, compelled to learn our own helplessness when the time comes. We can pray, we can use loving influence; but we cannot compel. I wonder if that was what St. Paul meant by the 'weakness of God';<sup>1</sup> that He also, to win the voluntary trust of free men, has laid aside His powers of compulsion? Does He feel with us that weakness of the love that waits for the love of another, the unbought gift that cannot be had except as a gift?

But is the lad really free? Have we not already said that the Christian religion has encompassed him from his cradle? Cannot you be practically sure that if he is a normal person he will accept it? The only answer to such doubts that I know is an appeal to one's own experience, and the fact of the influence upon personal character of such a decision as that of which we are speaking.

Here the true corporate life begins. It was there before, in a less developed condition, in the fellowship of the little child. Such a fellowship of teaching, directing, and giving is a very blessed one to many a parent or teacher. But when we meet with some

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 25.

one who has actually chosen, as we chose ourselves, to make the adventure of trusting Christ, we begin the real thing in its complete and fully developed form.

Bunyan gives us an exquisite description of the beginning of Christian fellowship. It is when Christian is going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death :

When Christian had travelled in this disconsolate condition some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man, as going before him, saying, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.'

Then he was glad, and that for these reasons: *First*, because he gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself. *Secondly*, for that he perceived God was with them, though in that dark and dismal state; and why not, thought he, with me? though by reason of the impediment that attends this place, I cannot perceive it. *Thirdly*, for that he hoped, could he overtake them, to have company by-and-by. So he went on, and called to him that was before; but he knew not what to answer; for that he also thought himself to be alone.

The first use of the life of fellowship is educational. We have to learn the manners and customs, the ways of thought and the forms of speech, the habits and practices of the religious life; and we learn them from one another. The fundamental habit of talking about them at all is not learned in a great many Christian companies, to their unspeakable loss.



For the ideas that we never talk about never develop. Mostly the reason why we do not talk about them is precisely because we do not wish them to develop. To use a homely illustration, digestion goes on best when we have no developed ideas about it, but leave it to lower nervous centres that do not report themselves to consciousness. To develop ideas about it as some people do, by means of endless unwelcome discussions, is to take it out of the control of these lower centres into the unsuitable control of consciousness, resulting in never-ending dyspepsias. Healthily-minded people do not want ideas about digestion, and, therefore, refuse to talk. Now, if we do not want religious ideas and experiences to develop, we shall, of course, seek silence. The explanation of much lack of progress is here.

But people are unwilling to talk because it seems almost a profanity. They cannot bear to expose their most sacred feelings at all. They could not find words to utter reverently and truly 'thoughts too deep for words.' All the tact and wisdom the Holy Spirit gives are indeed needed here. For the holy things ought not to be flung to the dogs. It is only in the most sacred confidence of friendship that the best things can be said. There is, moreover, a danger (and what precious thing is not dangerous?) of an over-exposed conscience becoming callous and blatant. Most Christians in most churches have been stopped by these dangers so far as actual personal conversation with each other is concerned. Some have left the talking to the minister in the pulpit. People can listen in company to what they could not bear to have said to them direct; and,

stranger still, a man can speak out to a great congregation heart secrets that he could not sit in his study and tell to his dearest friend. Some, again, have left the talking to be done in confession in the presence of God under the seal of absolute secrecy. Some have waited till they found a friend who made confidence possible; while others have found themselves able to tell their heart to an entire stranger whom they thought they would never meet again.

The matter is so vital to religious progress that we must at all costs cling to our dearly-won habit of talking to one another about religious experience, and, therefore, must encourage people to begin to do so when they first begin to share the Christian life. Certainly it is easier for them to do so then than it ever will be later. There is an instinct to open the heart and trust others at first, the power of which fades quite away if it is suppressed.

The connexion between fellowship and witness-bearing is very intimate. Testimony is due to our fellow Christians and also to them that are without. Our Lord has appointed us His witnesses. Judgement goes against Him by default if we do not speak up for Him. The refusal to talk about our religious experiences is a matter about which we have no right to judge one another, but to refuse to give a needful witness for Christ brings us under direct condemnation. This is, therefore, the best place to begin, because here we have the stimulus of a plain duty to assist us. And, as usual, the doing of that duty will make the next one plainer.

The habit of witness-bearing needs to be developed from the first. I fear that many parents unwittingly wrong their children by not remembering to tell them

plainly that it is Christ who holds them up and helps them to be good men and women. The children think their parents are good in themselves, and miss the inspiration to seek help from above that would have come from knowing that doing so was the secret of their parents' worthy life.

The same thing is true about many people who are living honourable and useful lives. They are looked up to by other men who appreciate highly their good character and worthy conduct. But they have not made it clear to all men that they stand because Christ holds them up. And those who admire them feel no call to come to Him, and He misses His joy of saving men, and the others miss the way of life, just because those whom He is upholding are silent when He needs their testimony.

When once the life of fellowship is started between people who have come to Christ, and are willing to talk together about the experience of personal religion, what Baldwin calls the 'Dialectic of personal growth' proceeds vigorously until something like a level of spiritual knowledge and conduct begins to be reached. But just as a man who has lived in a city takes his friend who is visiting him to see the sights, and tells him what he himself knows of the history and life of the place, but does not always make the occasion an opportunity for increasing his own knowledge of it, so there is a real danger that there shall be no very earnest attempt in the life of fellowship to transcend what I have called the general level of spiritual knowledge and conduct. It is a common opinion among the Methodist people that the best service our class-meetings render us is that of training young

converts. The truth of this opinion is the measure of our loss from this tendency to pause at a general level of attainment. One cannot read the story of John Wesley's life at the time when his 'heart was strangely warmed' without seeing the great use he made of the fellowship of the Moravians, and noting the advantage to him of being able to take to them every new thought and difficulty which his new aspirations and experiences brought with them. But the time came when he evidently felt that he had received what they were able to give him, and his eager heart turned to other problems of Christian living, concerning which he set himself to collect data wherever they could be found. One of these problems he specially left to his followers, that of Entire Sanctification. The tendency to pause at a general level has asserted itself so much, however, that this question also, though of the highest importance, has to a very large extent been laid aside. Yet it is peculiarly susceptible to treatment as a matter of fellowship. There are certain flaws of character, incompetencies, inefficiencies, and other defects that can be cured by discipline and education. People who are properly trained grow out of them. There is a more deep-seated evil, that of a bad heart, with which discipline and education cannot deal. The atoning death of Christ is the remedy for sin. So far as our knowledge and experience go, it works its miracle of redemption immediately, while discipline and education take time. A clear distinction between the evils curable by training and the sin which Christ takes away would be most serviceable, and a clear comprehension of the fact that He takes away all the sin, and

can do so now, would surely mean a glorious advance in the Christian standard of conduct. It ought to be within the power of our life of fellowship to attain results here that would add to the spiritual power and blessedness of the whole church.



## CHAPTER XIX

The objects of the life of fellowship—Common activity and emotion—Their interaction—The sharing of Christian thought—The 'odium theologicum'—Problems of the ministry and the Bible—The prayer-life—The life of Christ in the Body.

THE individual 'perfecting of the saints' is, however, only one of the objects of the corporate Christian life. There are also the 'work of ministering,' 'the building up of the body of Christ,' the attainment of 'the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,'<sup>1</sup> and the development of the church to full-grown manhood 'to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

The acquirement and use of powers of common action is an important means towards these great ends. This common action is directed towards God in worship, towards the individual members of the church in personal kindness and brotherly sympathy—especially such as shows itself in material things—and towards the world outside in evangelistic effort, in cordial co-operation with all that is good, and in resolute resistance to evil.

The common life has also a most precious emotional expression. Religious life has a large element of feeling, and our feelings have a greater value when they are shared. They then become real sources of insight. We need to feel the common joy or grief in order to understand fully their inner meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 13.

The interaction of doing and feeling is a matter of very great practical importance. There is a danger of giving too great a predominance to Christian emotion. It is a very blessed thing to enjoy the feelings that can be evoked by the sharing of Christian experience ; but the consequences of allowing ourselves the luxury of deep and strong emotions which evaporate without having produced any worthy and effective action have often been pointed out by the psychologist. If we want to feel the joy and blessedness of the deepest common emotion, we ought to give very much more prominence to the life of common action. If we can work together for the things of the Kingdom, if we can combine to give a good and effective witness for Christ, and share with each other the toil, the patience, the disappointments, and the successes of common activity, we may then safely allow ourselves to taste to the full the blessedness of those deep emotional experiences which we have been taught to prize so highly.

Another thing which much needs sharing is Christian thought. The attainment of the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God is a goal despaired of too easily. Much more has already been accomplished than people think. One might appeal to Biblical Theology and ask what previous experience the Christian world has had of such a real approach towards unanimity as we see to-day. People are often afraid of talking theology together ; partly lest they should weary one another, and partly lest they should disagree. There is by no means a sufficient amount of common consideration given to these matters in our Church. To a

large extent they are left to the trained expert. This, however, is a great mistake ; the truths of the Christian religion can be appreciated on their intellectual side by many people who have had no advantages of training, but possess an insight which leads them nearer to the heart of things than many others can get after long lives of study. I believe the same thing is true of philosophy, and that one hindrance to its progress has been that the common man, who is often most keenly interested in thinking out the great problems of life and being, has been so resolutely warned off from its area. If, however, there is to be a common life of Christian thinking, it will make large demands upon the patience and good temper of those who set themselves to live it. The emotional part of the Christian life sometimes asserts itself in this sphere unduly and dangerously. It seems to us as if it did not consist with our loyalty to God and Christ to tolerate opinions and thoughts which do not harmonize readily with our own conceptions. And, of course, this is not an altogether wrong feeling. That which does strike at the root of our knowledge of God ought to be even passionately repudiated ; but it is often an arrogant selfishness rather than a loyalty to our Master which produces the well-known 'odium theologicum.'

Difficulties, however, ought not to debar us from seeking a large development of a life of fellowship on the lines of Christian thinking. There is much solid gain to be won if people will only bring into the common life the thoughts they are thinking as well as the emotions they feel. To name a particularly difficult subject of our own day, the question of the

constitution and authority of the Christian ministry would not much longer divide the Church of Christ as it now does, if only people of different schools could be persuaded to have enough patience with one another, and to believe sufficiently in one another's common Christianity to try and understand each other's point of view. So long as they attack one another, and defend themselves from a distance, and take shelter behind the fortifications of separate church organizations, there seems very little hope of any healing of our present divisions. But the common life is at any rate strong enough even to-day for men to be quite thoroughly ashamed that the work of the Church in the presence of the heathen world should be crippled by these things; and it may be that the very pain and humiliation of this crippling will lead them at last to see that it is only together, as members of the one body, sharing the common life, that we can hope to surmount such difficulties as these.

The same thing is true about the question of the authority and content of the Scriptures. Not only may we expect solutions of these present difficulties that will set the Church at liberty for swift advance, but also there must be discoveries not very far away from us of God's power of which at present we have hardly dreamed. We are told in very high terms indeed of His ability to do 'exceeding abundantly' beyond all our thoughts, and yet the acts and deeds of the Church, done in His name, are often pitifully ineffective and feeble. 'To expect great things from God' becomes difficult, to 'attempt great things for God' impossible, just for the lack of that exploration of His infinite



resources which can only be carried out in common.

This leads us to speak of the prayer-life. Surely we have not yet begun to realize our inheritance in this regard. The promises of our Bible are very familiar to us, so far as the words go; but the meaning of them seems to have been set aside as though they signified nothing. If Christian people met together and talked to one another as gravely and earnestly about the things for which they were going to ask God, or the matters they intended to lay before Him for His guidance and leadership, as they talk about matters they propose to lay before some political leader, or the programme of some new enterprise which they desire to issue to the world, surely there would be a most amazing extension of our experiences of the power of prayer. It is, of course, a great thing to use the words that have for many generations expressed the outgoing of the heart of humanity; but such well-known words are bound to become empty of their meaning unless, before being used to God at all, they are from time to time considered by the company that is about to utter them. Our common prayer, that is to say, needs time for meditation and deliberation, and opportunity for discussion. It ought to be the final result of high and earnest resolve, deliberately come to by the community, if we want it to have the place and power that the teachings of the Lord and of the writers of the New Testament give to it. What a difference the common confession of sin would have in a group of people who had really opened their hearts to one another, and felt something of the tragedy of individual failure, and also



of that other tragedy of the failure of the common Christian life in their midst ! And the great thanksgivings, how joyful they would be, and what a vision of the triumphs of the power and goodness of God they would bring with them, if we did but take the simple advice to 'count our blessings, and name them one by one' together, before we unitedly turned to God to praise Him !

The truth is that we are only just beginning in very baby-fashion to live the life of membership of the Body of Christ. It is in a somewhat narrow and exclusive sense that we have sung, 'Thou, O Christ, art all I want.' May we not take that Name in the sense in which St. Paul often used it, so that 'in Christ' means for us not only immediate personal relation to Him, but also full relationship with our fellow Christians ?

St. Paul does not hesitate to use the great name 'Christ' when he is thinking of that great body of redeemed humanity of which He is the Head, thinking of the members 'in Him.'<sup>1</sup> Our need of Him as Saviour and Lord is, of course, supremely great ; but we have need, and so has He, of the whole company. 'The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you.'<sup>2</sup> In this largest sense it is more true than ever that He is all we want, and it is in 'these my brethren, even these least,'<sup>3</sup> that we shall most assuredly find Him.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxv. 40.

## CHAPTER XX

Towards a doctrine of fellowship—The Personality of God—The Godhead a Society—The creation of the world—Was it for man?—The creation of man and his 'dominion'—The race and the individual—The doctrine of Sin—Redemption and the centrality of Christ—Sinners saved as individuals into the new society—'No salvation outside the church,' but what is the church?—Its present condition—The fellowship available here and now—Its prospects and destiny.

SOME day it will be possible to state a definite 'doctrine of fellowship' which will be generally accepted by Christian people, and will form the foundation for a better and more successful church life than we now possess. It is perhaps already possible to draw an outline of it that will at any rate serve as a rough sketch to be criticized and improved upon. Let us try to do so.

We shall have to begin by insisting upon the Personality of God. It must be earnestly maintained that He is the Living God. The doctrines of philosophy must not be allowed to obscure the fact of His duration. Though He is unchangeable, He truly lives, and the reality of His life needs emphasis. His purposes ripen; they do not at once leap to maturity. His long-suffering waits. His government moves forward to a chosen End which will be the consummation of all the past and its final explanation. It must be clearly shown that

He is a God of Love. No doctrine of His Omnipotence, for instance, must hide the truth that He is doing *all He can* to save men, and that His whole resources are being used to the uttermost in the work of redemption. He has made the supreme Sacrifice of love that He may be a just God and a Saviour. He has given all that He had to give. That is a much more important fact for religion than any theory as to His absoluteness. If it does not square with philosophic conceptions of His nature, it is the philosophy that needs correction and not the religion. And He is not only possessed of a personal Will which aims at a definite Purpose, and a loving Heart which gives itself to the uttermost for the salvation of His People, but also of a Mind characterized by supreme Reason and Wisdom. His mind does not reflect the Universe; it thought the Universe, and His spoken word gave it being.

None of these truths, that God is Will and Love and Reason, fit very well with philosophic ideas about the Absolute; but they represent the Nature and Character of God with a reality to which philosophic ideas can lay no claim. We are not content to say that the doctrine of God's perfect personality is necessary to religion; we must go further, and maintain that to think of Him in any other way is to miss the mark and fall into dangerous error.

We must go further, and maintain that the God-head is itself a Society. The doctrine of the Trinity is essentially a doctrine of personal life. This distinction in the Divine Nature makes possible the belief that God is love. It makes possible the great Act and Deed of Love that took place on Calvary. And it makes possible that 'taking up His abode

with us ' through the Comforter He was about to send, of which our Lord spoke to His disciples. The doctrine that One of the Persons of the Trinity wears our human nature and is the Head of our race is essential to us, as is also the doctrine that Another Person is a Spirit capable of indwelling in our hearts so that His Presence is indeed the presence of God and of Christ.

In a word, the orthodox Christian doctrine of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, and of the Holy Ghost is the first thing needful for any true and helpful theory of Christian fellowship.

We need next a firm grip of the doctrine of creation. This living God is Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. The natural world with its marvellous order is an effect of which He is the cause. The worlds were framed by the word of God. Things did not come from things. They came from Him. ' For His pleasure they exist, and were created.' We need, I think, to go further. The Book of Proverbs tells us that the Divine Wisdom rejoiced in ' His *habitable* earth ; and her delights were with the sons of men.'<sup>1</sup> I suggest that a theory of fellowship demands that we should hold that the material universe was created for man's use, and that its true end and purpose is to find a home for our race and an opportunity for its discipline. I am very well aware how impossible this seems to many thinking people, and I cannot here give my reasons for believing it to be true ; but I have thus bluntly stated my position because it seems wanted here,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. viii. 31.

and I think it will one day be justified. If there are other persons in the universe besides mankind, then, of course, it would follow that creation is also for them. But they and ourselves must ultimately be one since God is one.

The next matter is of much greater importance. The creation of man must not be put down as a mere part of the greater work of making the world. It is itself the greater work, the one for which the world was made. From the beginning man was more than a part of the world. He was its owner and lord. He received *dominion* over the living creatures and the things. And he holds 'nearer of God who gives, than of His tribes that take.' He is capable of fellowship with God. His body links him to the animals and the material substances; but his personal life brings him into closest touch with God. The phrase 'partaker of the divine nature' represents truly the purpose of God in his creation.

I have spoken of man rather than of men. For I hold that the race was not created for the individual but the individual for the race. This must not be taken as any weakening of the supreme importance of personal freedom. The place where most theories of social life have broken down is precisely here. Their makers have felt that there was some antagonism between the personal independence of the individual and the claims of social life, and they have either whittled down the social claims to preserve the dignity of the individual, or attempted to cramp and fetter him till he could be squeezed into a place in the social organism. But the two apparently inconsistent elements are vitally necessary to each other. No worthy society can be made



except out of the voluntary union of free men, and no man can continue to be truly free except by willingly entering and loyally living the social life. In the interests of individuality we must resist any tendency to belittle the importance of the social life, and in the interests of the social life we must equally resist any attempt to limit the freedom of the individual. The bond of society is the bond of love, and men must be as free as God Himself if they are to love as He does. He is absolutely true to the social bond: He keeps covenant even with men who have broken it, and 'for His holy name's sake' goes on with His work of redemption. And, similarly, the men who have 'entered into liberty' are the men whose loyalty never falters.

We must think, therefore, of mankind as a whole as the object of God's creative and redemptive love, and of the man as made for the society, and made free that he might enrich it with that treasure of love which only a free man can give.

The next piece of theology that we want for our purpose is the doctrine of sin. It 'came into the world' of men. It had no sort of right there, but it came. It was an intrusion of that which *ought not to be*. There can be no logic of it, for it is utterly unreasonable. It is lawlessness. It is essentially a personal matter, and has no existence outside of personal life. But inside that area it has worked terrible havoc, separating men from God and from one another; in a word, working death. It disintegrated the solidarity of mankind, and it parted man from God. Men's wickedness called forth His anger. There is no possibility any longer of realizing the original purpose of God in creating man

except in connexion with His great war against sin. The problem of society becomes a problem of redemption. The disintegrated units of society must, one by one, become recipients of a new life, through the means of which they may become reunited again as members of a new social whole. To accomplish this tasks high and hard all the resources of the Godhead. At supremest cost the victory was won, and 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' And the new life which they have received (received while they were yet sinners) expresses itself in the loving bonds of a new society *into which* they are saved.

The doctrine of sin thus leads us directly to the doctrine of Redemption, and, therefore, to that of the Person of Christ. His work of deliverance restores harmony and peace to the whole totality consisting of God, the personal world, and the material universe. He who does this work is in an absolutely central position with regard to all three elements of this totality. He is central in the fellowship of God. His gift of new life, which life is in Himself, makes Him a 'Second Adam,' a new original for the spiritual life of the human race. His activity as the Agent of creation, together with His contact with the material world through His human nature, show a similar centrality with regard to the universe of things. His work of redemption brings order and peace to a distracted universe, to guilty men salvation and restoration to the divine society, and infinite glory to God.

So far as it is possible we want a doctrine of Atonement. It must maintain the full meaning of the truth that Christ died for our sins, the just for

the unjust, to bring us to God. We may indeed find that there is something here that passes understanding. Sin is the negation of reason and righteousness. It may well be that the act which takes away sin is as much above our thoughts of reason and righteousness as the fact of sin is below them. At any rate sin and redemption both are beyond the grasp of our logic. They belong to that order of things where we can understand but never define. But our doctrine of Atonement must set forth with the utmost plainness the love of God in sending His Son, and also the constraining love of Christ. For love is the bond of unity between God and His people ; and it is only in Christ that we have come to know what love is.

Here, then, is the place where the problem of the individual and the society, of Personality and Fellowship, confronts us. We are entitled to assume that the victory won by our Lord on Calvary is a complete one. His salvation is not a second-best affair. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' and we sing of our Saviour that

In Him the tribes of Adam boast  
More blessings than their father lost.

We may believe, then, that the new Society is the end for which the individual is made, and that in it he will find the meaning and value of all his powers. Its life is the one life that is really worth his living, the one life in which he can truly find God. Since God saves sinners, and a sinner is by the very fact of his sin separated from God and from God's company of men, he must be saved as an individual. He must 'come to God for himself.' But He to

whom the sinner comes is the centre of all true life and fellowship ; to come to Him is to come to the Church of the firstborn, and to be received by Him is to be received into His family as one of His children. Henceforward the life is to be that of fellowship. The life lived by the faith of the Son of God is no longer the narrow individual life ; it is the common life of the whole body which manifests itself in each several member. In this sense the old saying is quite true, '*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*' ('There is no salvation outside the church'). If every one who is saved is *saved into* the church, obviously there is no salvation which leaves a man outside of that body in which the new life is lived.

This is, however, a matter about which misunderstanding is terribly easy, and has produced most shocking results. The Church, the organized common life of redeemed humanity, is not a static fact complete and calculable ; it is a fact of life. Like all life, it is more a coming to be than a definite actual being. 'Each several building *grows* into a holy temple in the Lord.' The difference is just this, that if a man regards 'the Church' as ready-made, and then applies the doctrine that outside of the Church there is no salvation, he is prepared to deny the salvation of any man who is not willing to come inside the definite organization which he knows as the church. But, on the other hand, if we regard the Church as a common life which, like all other lives, is coming to be, and only attains to self-realization gradually and slowly, we shall look upon the salvation as the certain, given fact, and wait to see it realize itself in some social structure which can proceed to grow into the holy temple.



It is with this thought that we must meet the painful fact of the disjointed and fragmentary condition of the one Holy Catholic Church as we see it to-day. The life that is in it tends to grow together. There is that in the heart of every one of its members which tells him that he belongs to the whole company of Christ. Wherever the Spirit of God is welcomed the unity of the Spirit already asserts itself. It is no part of any man's loyalty to his church to maintain antagonism with other churches. Much of our separatism comes from the pride of our leaders, and is rebuked by the conscience of their more humble-minded followers. The babes have more revealed to them than the wise and prudent.

That wonderful paradox of the Corporate Life of which we have already spoken, the equalization of the part with the whole through the presence of the Head, whereby the meeting of two or three actually is for them the Holy Catholic Church, delivers us from the worst results of our unhappy divisions. The supreme thing in the Christian religion, *the* fellowship, that which is with the Father and the Son, is not a thing to be waited for until the 'body' has grown to its full maturity and can be presented to God 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.' It is possible here and now. The available time and the available persons are sufficient. What is needed is that we should accept them and live the life. If we are starved, it is because we will not believe that God can feed us here and now, and will not take the gift of life that comes to us in such homely guise.

Our doctrine of fellowship must contain a very



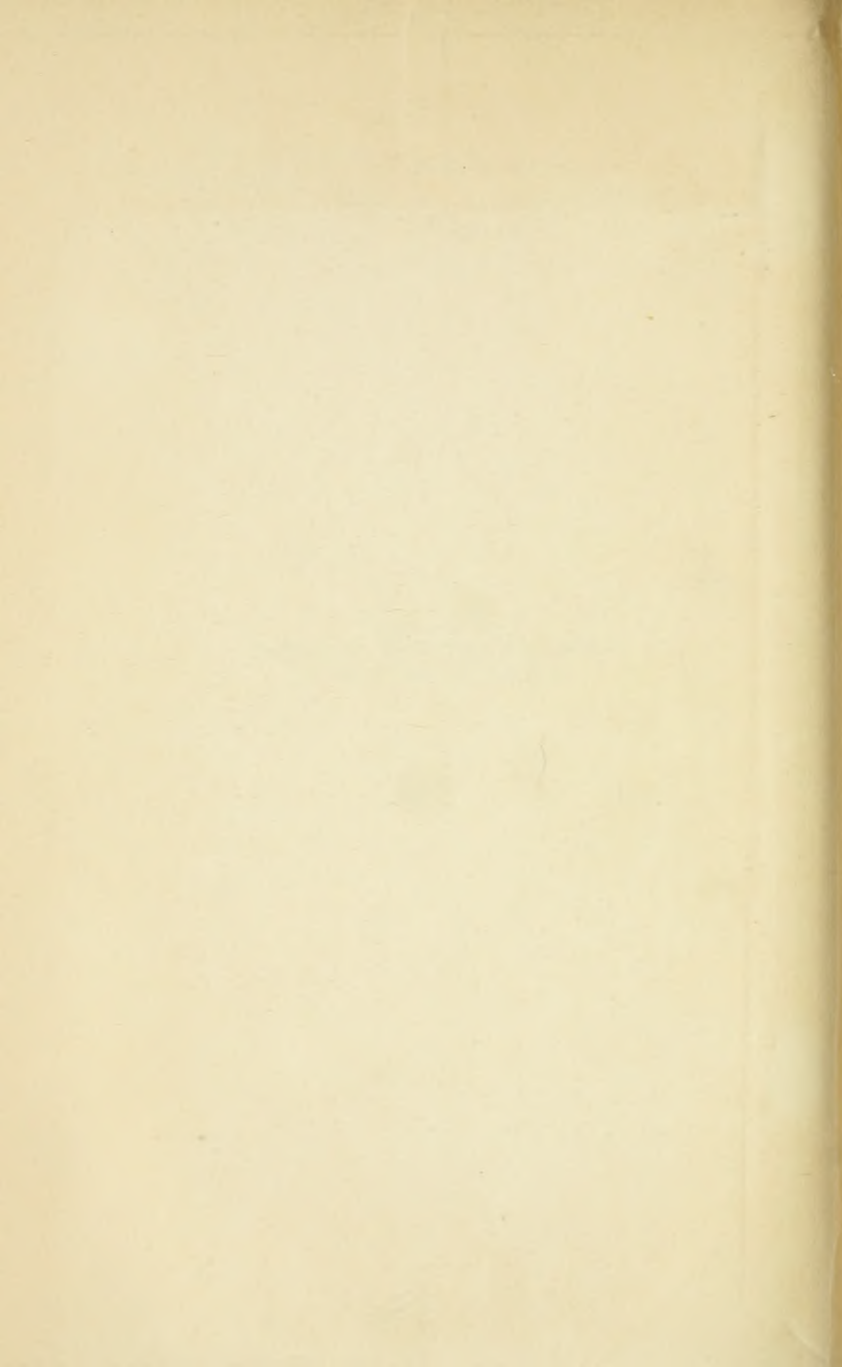
firm and confident assertion that the good we seek is not in heaven that we should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us? Neither is it beyond the sea that we should say, Who shall go over the sea for us? It is indeed very nigh unto us, if we will but dare to see it in the little handful of unlikely people near to us who want to live to God as we do ourselves.

But alongside of an emphatic assertion of the present reality of our fellowship there must be the largest possible recognition of the immeasurable greatness to which it is destined to grow, and also of the high duty that is laid upon us to further that growth by every means in our power. We must repudiate strenuously the slothful indifference that tolerates hindrances because it is a trouble to remove them. We must never allow for a moment the thought that because it is possible to live the beautiful life in spite of evil circumstances, there is no need to be very keen about the removal of the things that hamper us. The great command, 'Let My people go that they may serve Me,' must ring in our ears till all the social miseries are removed that make men unable to listen to the message of God 'for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage.' And we must not tolerate in the life of the church itself either the neglect or the perversion of function which restrain the full expression of the common life. We must awaken the conviction—or, if it is already awake, develop it—that there are, close to us, immense possibilities of Christian progress that have never been realized. Such great tides of spiritual power as the original Methodist revival stand as witnesses that God can make new things, and that

Christian fellowship has unheard-of resources which have never yet been brought to light. The abolition of war and of poverty, the uplifting of the backward races of mankind, the healing of the divisions of the Christian church, the evangelization of the world, the gaining of a theology capable of transfiguring the world's thought, and above all the attainment of a holier and more Christlike standard of life and a fuller vision of God,—are prizes of our high calling that we are surely intended by God to win, and can win if we will only help one another to find out the way.

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